![Cambridge Assessment International Education logo]

Coursework Handbook
Component 3 – Coursework Portfolio

Cambridge IGCSE™ / IGCSE (9–1)
First Language English 0500 / 0990

For examination from 2020

Cambridge Pathway

Contents

Introduction

This handbook provides a guide to the coursework option (Component 3 – Coursework Portfolio) in the Cambridge IGCSE First Language English syllabus (for examination from 2020).

Its purpose is to give advice and clarification on:

- the content of the coursework portfolios

- planning and carrying out the work

- assessing the coursework

- preparing the coursework for external moderation.

This handbook contains marked examples of assignments 1, 2 and 3 followed by moderator comments which highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the assignments.

Teaching and learning resources

Your centre will be sent a report from the Moderator who moderated the work about the performance of your learners once the results have been published. Additionally, the *Principal Examiner's Report for Teachers* can be found on the School Support Hub www.cambridgeinternational.org/support This discusses the performance of the whole cohort generally across all components of the qualification, including the coursework. These reports can be used to inform your teaching on this qualification going forward.

Our School Support Hub provides Cambridge schools with a secure site for downloading specimen and past question papers, mark schemes, grade thresholds and examiner reports.

Go to the dedicated page on the School Support Hub , click on the Teaching and Learning tab and you will find guidance (and marked samples) on the Speaking and Listening component, schemes of work and examples of marked work in our published *Example Candidate Responses.* A *Learner Guide* is also available for this subject. The School Support Hub community also offers teachers the opportunity to connect with each other and to ask questions related to the syllabus.

A list of endorsed textbooks and resources from publishers are listed on our public website at www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-igcse-english-first-language-0500/support-material/

Cambridge Professional Development for teachers

We offer regular training workshops (INSET) for Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses. Online training is also available, increasing access for teachers who have limited time or are a long way from training events. Details and availability of courses can be found at www.cambridgeinternational.org/events.

1. Coursework Portfolio

1.1. Requirements of the syllabus

1.1.1 Advantages of coursework

With the support of teachers, coursework allows candidates the freedom and scope:

- to improve their writing skills over a period of time

- to choose topics of personal interest to them, reflecting their lives and their localities

- to consider the quality of their work and to edit, revise and correct it independently

- to take pride in their completed portfolios.

1.1.2 Aims of coursework

Coursework provides the opportunity for learners to:

- become better writers and thinkers including by writing accurately and effectively

- become better readers (in Assignment 1) by reading critically and working with information by developing skills of selection, evaluation and analysis

- express their personal views on the world about them, appropriate to their age, maturity and experience.

1.1.3 Assessment objectives for writing

The contents of the portfolio should test the following writing assessment objectives of the syllabus in equal measure.

W1 Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined.

W2 Organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect.

W3 Use a range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context.

W4 Use register appropriate to context.

W5 Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

1.1.4 Assessment objectives for reading

In Assignment 1 only, where 15 marks are available for reading, the following reading objectives are assessed:

R1 Demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings.

R2 Demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes.

R3 Analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text.

R5 Select and use information for specific purposes.

1.1.5 Contents of the Coursework Portfolio

Candidates submit a portfolio of **three** assignments, each of about 500–800 words. These assignments may be completed in any order but should be presented as shown below. The maximum mark for the portfolio is 80, of which 65 marks are for writing and 15 are for reading (Assignment 1).

- **Assignment 1:** writing to discuss, argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts of approximately two sides of A4 in total, chosen by the centre. Text(s) may consist of facts, opinions and/or arguments which can be selected, analysed and evaluated by the candidate and can be integrated into their own views. Candidates respond to the text(s) by selecting, analysing and evaluating the ideas and opinions in the text (not the topics of the texts). They may write in any appropriate form they wish. Different candidates in the same teaching set may choose to respond to different text(s) and/or in different forms.

- **Assignment 2:** writing to describe

- **Assignment 3:** writing to narrate

The text(s) upon which Assignment 1 is based **must** be included in the sample sent to the moderator. The portfolio must include the first draft of **one** of the three assignments.

Assignments may be hand-written or word-processed. Dictionaries/spell-checks may be used.

1.1.6 Length of assignments

The discussion about a first draft should include consideration of length, and/or whether some of the material could be cut to make the writing more powerful or effective.

We do not prescribe a minimum or maximum number of words for any assignment. 500 words per piece are sufficient for the award of the highest marks, and, while not necessarily an upper limit, assignments longer than 800 words may become self-penalising.

Marks should **never** be automatically deducted for exceeding the upper figure of 800 words per assignment. However, work that is significantly over or under the suggested length tends to be self-penalising, and can struggle to meet the requirements of the upper levels. For example, many candidates who write at great length cannot sustain content or style effectively. They should especially be taught to avoid long sections of narrative that do not relate to the theme of a story (including irrelevant detail, and dialogue that does not add impetus to the plot). Work that is under 500 words may not be long enough to develop and structure the piece of writing satisfactorily.

1.1.7 Teacher responsibilities

Teachers should:

- plan and set assignments which meet the requirements and are appropriate to the abilities of their learners

- assess the effectiveness of each assignment against the objectives

- annotate the candidates' work to indicate the reasons for marking decisions to external moderators. Annotations should include a summative comment at the end of each assignment indicating, with reference to the mark scheme, how and why marks have been awarded. Teachers are also requested to indicate all errors in in the final version of each *assignment* (e.g. by underlining each error)

- mark each assignment individually using the relevant mark table of level descriptions including a mark out of 15 for the quality of the reading in Assignment 1. The marks for each assignment should then be added together to form the final mark out of 80. Each missing assignment is self-penalising and should be given a mark of 0

- contribute to an internal moderation process where a centre has more than one teacher/moderator, to ensure all candidates are assessed to a common standard and all the centre's candidates are placed in rank order. Please refer to the samples database at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples for further information regarding the process of internal moderation. Further details about how to conduct internal moderation can be found later in this guide (section 4.5)

- **not** correct drafts of candidate work. Teachers are not allowed to make specific corrections on the draft of a candidate's work. Comments and general advice may be given at the end of each piece of work.

1.1.8 Incomplete folders

The contents of the portfolio should be assessed individually using each relevant table of level descriptors in the usual way to give a mark for each assignment.

1.1.9 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work or ideas as one's own. This might happen in a number of different ways. For example:

- failing to acknowledge quotations

- using particular phrases or sentences from another author without giving them credit, e.g. via inverted commas and a footnote

- writing something that is only very slightly different (e.g. a few words altered) from another author's work, known as paraphrasing

- buying a project from an internet site and presenting it as your own

- pasting in text or images from an internet site without acknowledgement

- having somebody else write all or part of the work on the author's behalf.

It is the centre's responsibility to make sure all coursework is the original work of candidates. Teachers need to make clear the consequences of plagiarism, both at the outset of the course and at intervals thereafter.

Detection is normally easy since the language of a copied assignment will generally differ in complexity from the candidate's own writing. It is also sometimes easy to search for particular phrases online to see whether they come from a website.

To help prevent plagiarism, some work on each assignment should be carried out in the classroom. For example, the work could be planned and each candidate's work monitored. If the first draft differs greatly from the plan, suspicion may be aroused. The writing of the first draft in the classroom might be the most secure form of supervision. It is important that each stage of the writing is monitored.

Assignment 2 and Assignment 3 may be the most prone to misuse of the internet due to the nature of the writing.

Generally, Assignment 1 is the least prone. As such it may be useful to compare the style of Assignment 1 with that of Assignment 2 and Assignment 3 when checking for plagiarism.

Another indication may be a paragraph or section which sits oddly with the writing before and after it. Perhaps there is some uncharacteristically ambitious phrasing; a simple enquiry about the meaning of the phrase will settle doubts one way or the other.

The teacher's role in detecting plagiarism is crucial. If you have doubts about the authenticity of an assignment, it should not be submitted, even if this means an incomplete folder must be submitted. Cambridge's policy on dealing with malpractice can be found in the *Cambridge Handbook* found on our public website at www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridge-for/exams-officers/cambridge-exams-officers-guide/

1.2. Assessment: mark schemes

When assessing each assignment in the portfolio and as a general principle, marking should be positive. Achievement should be rewarded where possible if there is sufficient evidence to do so. Differentiation across the whole range of levels and marks available should be carefully considered.

1.2.1 Table A: Level descriptions for writing in Assignment 1 (15 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
6	13–15	• Highly effective style capable of conveying subtle meaning. (W1) • Carefully structured for benefit of the reader. (W2) • Wide range of sophisticated vocabulary, precisely used. (W3) • Highly effective register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Spelling, punctuation and grammar almost always accurate. (W5)
5	10–12	• Effective style. (W1) • Secure overall structure, organised to help the reader. (W2) • Wide range of vocabulary, used with some precision. (W3) • Effective register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Spelling, punctuation and grammar mostly accurate, with occasional minor errors. (W5)
4	7–9	• Sometimes effective style. (W1) • Ideas generally well sequenced. (W2) • Range of vocabulary is adequate and sometimes effective. (W3) • Sometimes effective register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Spelling, punctuation and grammar generally accurate though with some errors. (W5)
3	5–6	• Inconsistent style, expression sometimes awkward but meaning clear. (W1) • Relies on the sequence of the original text. (W2) • Vocabulary is simple, limited in range or reliant on the original text. (W3) • Some awareness of an appropriate register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, sometimes serious. (W5)
2	3–4	• Limited style. (W1) • Response is not well sequenced. (W2) • Limited vocabulary or words/phrases copied from the original text. (W3) • Limited awareness of appropriate register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Persistent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	1–2	• Expression unclear. (W1) • Poor sequencing of ideas. (W2) • Very limited vocabulary or copying from the original text. (W3) • Very limited awareness of appropriate register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Persistent errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar impede communication. (W5)
0	0	• No creditable content.

1.2.2 Table B: Level descriptions for reading in Assignment 1 (15 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
6	13–15	• Successfully evaluates ideas and opinions, both explicit and implicit. (R1, R2, R3) • Assimilates ideas from the text to give a developed, sophisticated response. (R3, R5)
5	10–12	• Some successful evaluation of ideas and opinions, both explicit and implicit. (R1, R2, R3) • A thorough response, supported by a detailed selection of relevant ideas from the text. (R3, R5)
4	7–9	• Begins to evaluate mainly explicit ideas and opinions. (R1, R2, R3) • An appropriate response that includes relevant ideas from the text. (R3, R5)
3	5–6	• Selects and comments on explicit ideas and opinions. (R1, R2, R3) • Makes a general response including a few relevant ideas from the text. (R3, R5)
2	3–4	• Identifies explicit ideas and opinions. (R1, R2, R3) • Makes a limited response with little evidence from the text. (R3, R5)
1	1–2	• Very limited response with minimal relation to the text. (R1, R2, R3, R5)
0	0	• No creditable content.

It is most important to base your marks for reading on the level descriptions for reading only. You will notice the use of 'successfully evaluates' and 'assimilate' and 'developed, sophisticated response' in Level 6. It is also important to compare the description of Level 6 with that of Level 3, where ideas are selected rather than evaluated.

1.2.3 Table C: Level descriptions for composition: content and structure in Assignment 2 (10 marks) and Assignment 3, (10 marks)

Level	Marks	General and specific marking criteria	
6	9–10	**General**	
		• Content is complex, engaging and effective. (W1)	
		• Structure is secure, well balanced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. (W2)	
		Specific – descriptive	**Specific – narrative**
		Many well-defined and developed ideas and images create a convincing overall picture with varieties of focus.	*The plot is well-defined and strongly developed with features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation and effective climax, and convincing details.*
5	7–8	**General**	
		• Content is developed, engaging and effective. (W1)	
		• Structure is well managed, with some choices made for deliberate effect. (W2)	
		Specific – descriptive	**Specific – narrative**
		Frequent, well-chosen images and details give a mostly convincing picture.	*The plot is defined and developed with features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation, climax and details.*
4	5–6	**General**	
		• Content is relevant with some development. (W1)	
		• Structure is competently managed. (W2)	
		Specific – descriptive	**Specific – narrative**
		A selection of relevant ideas, images and details, even where there is a tendency to write in a narrative style.	*The plot is relevant and cohesive, with some features such as characterisation and setting of scene.*
3	3–4	**General**	
		• Content is straightforward and briefly developed. (W1)	
		• Structure is mostly organised but may not always be effective. (W2)	
		Specific – descriptive	**Specific – narrative**
		The task is addressed with a series of relevant but straightforward details, which may be more typical of a narrative.	*The plot is straightforward, with limited use of the features of narrative writing.*
2	2	**General**	
		• Content is simple, and ideas and events may be limited. (W1)	
		• Structure is partially organised but limited in its effect. (W2)	
		Specific – descriptive	**Specific – narrative**
		The recording of some relevant events with limited detail.	*The plot is a simple narrative that may consist of events that are only partially linked and/or which are presented with partial clarity.*
1	1	**General**	
		• Content is occasionally relevant or clear. (W1)	
		• Structure is limited and ineffective. (W2)	
		Specific – descriptive	**Specific – narrative**
		The description is unclear and lacks detail.	*The plot and/or narrative lacks coherence.*
0	0	No creditable content.	

1.2.4 Table D: Level descriptions for composition: style and accuracy in Assignment 2 (15 marks) and Assignment 3 (15 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
6	13–15	• Precise, well-chosen vocabulary and varied sentence structures, chosen for effect. (W3) • Consistent well-chosen register suitable for the context. (W4) • Spelling, punctuation and grammar almost always accurate. (W5)
5	10–12	• Mostly precise vocabulary and a range of sentence structures mostly used for effect. (W3) • Mostly consistent appropriate register suitable for the context. (W4) • Spelling, punctuation and grammar mostly accurate, with occasional minor errors. (W5)
4	7–9	• Some precise vocabulary and a range of sentence structures sometimes used for effect. (W3) • Some appropriate register for the context. (W4) • Spelling, punctuation and grammar generally accurate, but with some errors. (W5)
3	5–6	• Simple vocabulary and a range of straightforward sentence structures. (W3) • Simple register with a general awareness of the context. (W4) • Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, occasionally serious. (W5)
2	3–4	• Limited and/or imprecise vocabulary and sentence structures. (W3) • Limited and/or imprecise register for the context. (W4) • Persistent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	1–2	• Frequently imprecise vocabulary and sentence structures. (W3) • Register demonstrates little or no sense of the context. (W4) • Persistent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar impair communication. (W5)
0	0	• No creditable content.

1.2.5 Using mark schemes

The mark schemes are used to assess individual assignments as they are completed. Assignment 1 will have an aggregate total based on a combination of the marks awarded for writing and reading, Assignment 2 and Assignment 3 will each have a separate set of marks for a combination of 'Content and Structure' and 'Style and Accuracy'. The final mark for the portfolio is an arithmetical calculation based on the aggregate of the marks for the three assignments in the portfolio. Here is an example,

Assignment	Writing (15 marks)	Reading (15 marks)	Composition: Content & Structure (10 marks)	Composition Style & Accuracy (15 marks)	Total mark
1	12	11			23
2			9	12	21
3			8	10	18

Total mark awarded = 62 out of 80

The mark schemes are arranged in six levels for writing and six levels for reading with Level 0 being the lowest and Level 6 the highest in each case; read from the bottom to the top, each describes a more assured achievement than the one before.

When marking candidates' work, first read and annotate the work. Then make a 'best fit' judgement, where strengths and weaknesses are balanced with each other as to which **level** to place it in. Very often you may see qualities from more than one level, so always look at two levels at least and come to a decision between them.

Having decided at which level the work sits, award a specific **mark** from your chosen level. If all the criteria in a level fit your judgement, award the highest mark and check the level above, just in case. If most but not all of the criteria fit your judgement, award a mark nearer the bottom and check the level below, just in case.

Remember to use the relevant table of level descriptors for each assignment and that in each case an assignment will require two separate marks, e.g. in Assignment 2 for 'Content and Structure' **and** 'Style and Accuracy') that assess different skills from two different tables of level descriptors.

Depending on how your centre chooses to timetable the assignments during schemes of work, it may be advisable to internally moderate each assignment separately as opposed to trying to standardise complete portfolios once all have been completed. The syllabus treats each assignment as a separate entity so it may be easier to internally moderate each one accordingly.

When you have a completed set of portfolios for each candidate, the rank order will be automatically created by the total marks for each candidate.

At this stage, as the total mark for each portfolio is an addition of the individual marks for the assignments, there is no longer a need to pay special attention to the borderlines of the levels or to ensure that portfolios that lie within the same level are appropriately differentiated.

1.2.6 Annotation

It is essential that there is proof of the teacher's judgement on every assignment. There should be a comment on the strengths and weaknesses at the end of each piece, and errors should be annotated in the body of the work or in the margin. This annotation is important to the moderator because it helps to explain the mark that you have given. In addition, the *Individual Candidate Record Card* which can be found on the samples database at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples has a space for a comment justifying the marks given for the complete portfolio.

1.3. Developing and assessing skills

1.3.1 Content

W1: Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined

This objective gives candidates the freedom to write personally and express a maturity that goes beyond merely repeating anecdotes. Moderators often note that strong candidates reflect at length on experiences that teach them about themselves and the world about them, while simpler writing merely repeats the details of what happened.

It is therefore suggested that much of candidates' writing should connect with their own lives. In fiction, candidates can speak through their characters and present a criticism of the world they encounter themselves.

In non-fiction, candidates should not regurgitate the contents of a book or a website but should *comment* on what they have read, making it clear to the reader how personal ideas about aspects of their lives are forming. The opportunity to set down original thoughts and ideas in writing is fundamental to the philosophy of the coursework component.

Candidates should use complex ideas and develop them at length and with subtlety. Not all assignments demand the same level of content. It may be more difficult to argue a case than to inform a reader. There are also different degrees of skill in creating a narrative that will engage a reader with its semblance of reality and its various twists and turns. In task-setting it is important to match the demands of a task to the ability of a candidate. Mid-range candidates will be able to present straightforward content with confidence, but they may struggle with a more complex task. On the other hand, a candidate seeking a mark in Level 6 must show confidence in using content that is not simplistic.

1.3.2 Structure

W2: Organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect

This is very closely allied to content and it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. Every different genre has its own structure. For example, there are different conventions for presenting a letter and a newspaper article. Essays need to show some progression of thought and it is important that paragraphs have convincing connectives. Successful writing has sound overall structure and the paragraphs are logically sequenced. Narratives can go beyond simplistic beginnings, middles and ends. They show confidence in leading the reader into the main business of a story, developing ideas and creating tension, providing sustained climaxes and making sometimes unusual and entertaining endings. It is important that the different sections of a piece of writing are properly balanced in length and development.

1.3.3 Vocabulary and sentence structure

W3: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context

At lower levels, there may be little sign of a personal style. It may be a struggle to use enough varied words accurately, and style can be awkward and even clumsy or blurred. However, further up the scale, candidates show that they have increasing ability to communicate because their vocabulary is wider and more precise. The range of vocabulary and sentence structure is seen to widen as candidates use words to define meaning, to entertain and shape sentences to create a variety of appropriate effects. At Level 6 candidates use language with confidence. Candidates also make different choices of language and sentence structure to fit different genres, and this is demonstrated in the three assignments in the portfolio.

1.3.4 Audience

W4: Use register appropriate to context

Through this skill, the candidate considers who is meant to read each piece of writing and assumes an appropriate form of address and tone. This affects the sentence structure and the language. For example, there will be different degrees of formality, best exemplified in letter writing. The writing of a speech or an article is made more effective by an awareness of audience, and this applies to fiction as well. The sense of audience will, at its best, be very evident and will add to the reading experience.

1.3.5 Accuracy

W5: Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar

It is worth encouraging candidates to use a spellchecker, dictionary or thesaurus to improve their accuracy. Care should be taken when word-processing work. Typing mistakes should be treated as errors, whether these are spelling or punctuation mistakes. Punctuation errors are common, and it is important that mistakes in punctuation are indicated by the teachers in the final version of each assignment. In descriptive writing and narrative, the use of tense is a common error, either   because a present or past tense is not sustained or because there are difficulties with the use of more complex tenses.

2. Planning coursework

Before you start the course, you will need to think out your strategy. This is especially important if there is more than one teaching set and there are perhaps several different teachers. Some centres enter as many as ten or eleven sets, and you will want to make it as easy as possible to standardise the work in order to achieve a consistent and accurate approach to assessment. If the assessment of the individual assignments is accurate and reliable the total mark will also be accurate, and consequently a reliable rank order of candidates will be established.

2.1. Choosing the assignments

Some centres leave it to individual teachers to decide on their assignments. If so, it is wise to discuss what each teacher intends to set, since some assignments are more successful than others, and produce very different results with candidates of varying ability. Through such a discussion, there may be some beneficial sharing of ideas.

Some departments exercise an element of control by providing a list of topics for each assignment. Teachers and candidates are free to choose from these lists.

Small departments of two or three teachers often decide on a limited choice, and Assignment 1 is frequently based on the same text(s) given to all the candidates.

Many centres allow a choice of topics for Assignment 2 (to reflect the interests of their learners) and a choice of titles for Assignment 3, even if the writing arises from the same in-class activity (such as studying mystery stories). Questions from past examination papers should not be used for coursework. Centres are more likely to restrict the choice of texts for Assignment 1; it is not recommended that learners are given the option to decide on their own as some texts do not elicit good responses. Please note that literature texts are not considered suitable as a basis for Assignment 1.

In general, even where there are many teaching sets, there is less likely to be a wide choice of articles for Assignment 1.

Meetings held to decide a policy for task setting should help to encourage teachers and to save time and effort later on in the course.

2.2. Planning the workload

If you were taking the examination option, you would have to set practice compositions and examples and these would have to be assessed and appropriate feedback given to candidates.

The coursework option requires different preparation periods compared to the examination and to manage the time effectively you will need to consider that:

- each assignment should go through a draft/redraft phase, which can sometimes take longer than anticipated. You must include one first draft in your submission. This is to provide evidence that effective amendments are made before the final version is completed

- after **generic** guidance on the first draft, the teacher should assess the finished piece of work applying the tables of level descriptors according to best-fit judgements

- internal moderation must take place where there is more than one teacher/moderator in order to establish a reliable rank order.

Many centres confine themselves to the three required assignments. These are best planned during the five terms/semesters that precede the examination. You need to bear in mind the increasing maturity and improved skills of learners that should make successive pieces of writing more effective and interesting. Thus, you might expect a learner's best work to be completed nearer the end of the course than at the beginning.

2.3. Planning for a choice of assignments

It is recommended that candidates undertake more than the minimum three assignments during the course in order that a choice can be made as to which ones to include in the final portfolio because it does not follow that each learner performs equally well on all three assignments. To avoid irregular performance and to help learners improve their writing skills, some centres set more than three. They might set more than one task for Assignment 2, for example, describing the scene at a significant personal occasion and describing the surroundings in a busy train station; and for Assignment 3, some fiction and an autobiographical incident. This would give a wider, more educational experience of writing for different contexts, purposes and audiences. It would also enable a choice to be made of the best three pieces to make up the final portfolio.

A second important consideration is that each learner should attempt three different styles or genres of writing.

2.4. Planning for assessment: standardisation meetings

Assessment is an ongoing process. It is important to hold standardisation meetings where all teachers agree on the quality of specimen pieces throughout the course as work becomes available.

As a minimum, each meeting should look at three pieces of work that illustrate three different mark levels. There should be a discussion of the quality of the work. Each example should be assigned to a mark level and, lastly, a mark should be decided. Teachers should ensure that they give equal importance to each descriptor within a level in the relevant table of marks. It is most important that there should be agreement on the rank order of the work considered at the meeting.

It is generally beneficial to hold similar meetings at intervals during the course, which will save time when internal moderation takes place.

Further information about internal moderation can be found later in this guide (section 4.5).

3. Assignments

You have already considered the overall structure of the portfolio. Now it is time to look at the three separate assignments. In the final portfolio we are looking for three pieces that show a clear difference from each other, for example in style/register, audience and genre, so it is important to ensure that the course caters for varied writing before it comes to the time to assemble the final portfolio.

3.1   Assignment 1

3.1.1 Writing to discuss, argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts

The purposes for writing covered in Assignment 1 are to: **comment, evaluate, assimilate** and **argue** and/or **persuade**.

When marks are given for the candidate's response to some reading material selected for study by the centre, a copy of the material(s) must be included in the sample sent to the external moderator.

There are 15 marks available for the response to reading.

The syllabus requires candidates to select, assimilate and evaluate facts, opinions and arguments from a text or texts. The descriptors for Level 6 for reading clearly refer to candidates who 'assimilate ideas from the text to give a developed, sophisticated response' and 'successfully evaluate' both explicit and implicit ideas and opinions from the text(s). At Level 5, candidates respond thoroughly supported by a detailed selection of relevant ideas from the text(s) with 'some successful evaluation' of implicit and explicit ideas and opinions present. Candidates who make a more general response and comment on some explicit ideas from the text should be given a mark in Level 3.

There are also 15 marks available for writing.

A candidate who displays a 'highly effective style capable of conveying subtle meaning' employing a 'highly effective register' within a 'carefully structured' response can expect to be awarded a mark in Level 6, particularly if there is also a high degree of technical accuracy involved. At Level 5, the candidate's style will be 'effective' within a 'secure overall structure' whilst employing a wide range' of vocabulary and an 'effective' register with 'occasional minor' technical errors present. An 'inconsistent' style relying on the 'sequence of the original text(s)' with an 'adequate' range of vocabulary will fall into Level 3. There may also be 'some awareness of an appropriate register' and the response will contain 'frequent' technical errors.

When you assess Assignment 1, the two separate marks for reading and writing will be carried forward to the overall total.

Reading is **not** assessed in Assignment 2 and Assignment 3.

3.1.2 Choosing the text(s)

Text(s) should consist of facts, opinions and/or arguments which can be selected, analysed and evaluated by the candidate and can be integrated into their own views.

Experience has shown that certain types of text are more successful in encouraging appropriate responses than others. The best practice is as follows:

- Choose an article that contains ideas and opinions that can be argued, evaluated and developed. For example, the article may use inconsistent arguments or confuse fact and opinion.

- Choose text(s) of no more than two sides of A4 in total. If you choose too much reading material, it is difficult for candidates to select the best ideas to explore, and the result is that their responses are often too general and not specific enough.

- Avoid factual material, including newspaper reports, and lists of factual points from the internet (such as 'Ten ways to save the planet') as these have no arguments with which to engage.

- Avoid topics that are presented in such a way that it is not possible to disagree or to add much to what has been efficiently expressed.

- Avoid literature texts such as whole stories and poems unless they contain very obvious ideas and opinions.

3.1.3 Examples of successful articles

- University: why bother?
- Wearing fur
- How much money do I need to be happy?
- Why you can't sack boring teachers?
- Bringing up Chinese children
- Too young to be a criminal
- Plastic pollution
- Veganism
- Goal line technology (for football fans)
- Airbrushing photos of celebrities
- Underworked Americans (arguing that American work ethics are poor)
- Sex bias in the Girl Guides
- Claims that 'video games lead to violence' lead to violence ('Guardian' article)
- Should boxing be banned?
- The Olympics: an expensive indulgence or cause for celebration?

3.1.4 Comments on other types of text

(a) The words of speeches

Because speeches are normally strongly persuasive, they are suitable for this assignment. However, they should contain specific ideas and opinions. If they are too general and rhetorical in tone, it is sometimes difficult for learners to grasp what is relevant to a good answer. An analysis of the rhetorical devices used in the text is not relevant to this assessment.

(b) Literary material

Literary texts are often not suitable and are not recommended. A short chapter or section of a novel or short story, a whole poem or a short scene from a play, **provided that they contain ideas, opinions and/or arguments** may be used but there are many more productive alternatives available. **Literary criticism of the language or style is inappropriate for this assessment.**

(c) Texts from websites

Much of the website material seen by moderators is weak and unchallenging, owing to a tendency to list or report information, often in a brief and simple form. Even when the source is a newspaper, the article is often edited and the paragraphs short and undeveloped. Texts should be chosen with care from text-based websites.

(d) Travel literature

Town and city guides are unlikely to be challenging and are not recommended, but a great deal of travel literature (literary non-fiction) can be appropriate. Texts normally contain plenty of ideas and opinions, although if the candidate does not know the place described in the text, it may cause some degree of difficulty.

(e) The moving image

Not permitted. For the purposes of this assignment, owing to the complexities of supplying moderators with the material, such texts are not suitable. Since the test is of reading, candidates would have to describe what is seen and relate the text to it in a form that could be read. Even then, the preparation of the text would be a time-consuming job**.**

3.1.5 Task setting

The typical response to an article is to reply to the writer in the form of a letter. The letter may also be addressed to the publisher of the article. A response could also be in the form of a debate speech or even a conversation with the writer.

Direct responses are suitable for most texts. For example, a letter to an editor of a newspaper protesting about the ideas and opinions presented in an editorial. Lively writing, expressing strongly held personal views, tends to give better results than formal writing. However, candidates should avoid personal attacks on writers and confine themselves to the opinions and ideas that have been read.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to indicate where and how the candidate has shown understanding that merits credit. These should be specific to the chosen text as well as being criteria-based. Comments addressing the assessment of writing will be separate.

3.1.6 Key messages for Assignment 1

- Choose texts of a sensible length, that have plenty of ideas and opinions with which learners can engage. Texts should be differentiated to suit ability.

- Do not teach to the text. Candidates should express their own opinions, not those learned by the class.

- Make sure that candidates do not turn the exercise, even partly, into an analysis of style and language.

- When assessing both reading and writing, use the tables of level descriptors and make sure that you understand the key differences between the levels.

- Use Table A (Writing) and Table B (Reading) of the level descriptors when assessing Assignment 1.

Assignment 1 – Example 1

www.tes.com/news/why-social-media-should-be-banned-under-16s

Write a letter to Natasha Devon in response to her article 'Why social media should be banned for under 16s'

Dear Ms Devon,

I recently read your article entitled "Why Social Media should be banned for Under 16s", and I am writing this letter to explain why I completely disagree with your proposal. Whilst I agree that "no one fully understands the consequences of the widespread use of social media", this is a not a reason to abolish it. As a young person myself, I can offer more than any "steering group" or committee, to explain to you the effects of social media on the under 16s, some of which are entirely positive. I am, erm, "an actual young person"!

So, the European Union proposed a ban on under 16s using social media and, although you claim to be against "telling young people what their problems are" you have concluded that the European Union was "absolutely right to prose a ban as it did", even though your own research found the idea of such a ban to be "patronizing and unnecessary". You suggest that my generation, a group of individuals "born into a world of broadband, smart phones and widespread social media usage" is unable to view this argument objectively. On the contrary, I suggest to you that young people who have grown up in such an environment, are best placed to interrogate the pros and cons of social media use. We understand how it all works, we use it regularly and routinely, we see the effects it has. I would not be so impolite as to make a guess at your age, but something tells, me that your teenage years are somewhere in the distant past. As such, the online world is likely to be more alien to you, who did not grow up with social media, and it is this that makes so wary and critical of its use.

You draw our attention to the opinions of Professor Rachel Thompson, who claims that whilst adults use social media intermittently during breaks from other activities, for teenagers the balance is reversed. You argue that "if she is right" then teenagers are at risk of viewing their online lives as more "real" than their physical lives. The key word here is "if". With respect, it is my belief that Professor Thompson is wrong in her judgement of the situation. Moreover, I think people of a young age can see the difference between the online world which they spend time in and the real world. I know that for most of them, the real world is just as crucial as the online one. They do not consider the time spent with their family as an awkward "pause", and they value this part of their everyday routine.

You highlight the findings of Young Minds' research, showing the key areas of unhappiness amongst teenagers as: bullying, exam stress, sexual pressures from online pornography and body image. Bullying exists on line and in the real world and there is no doubt that this causes distress and needs to be addressed. However, this is not the fault of social media;

teenagers need to be educated about the ways they behave so that they learn to behave responsibly. Exam stress is not the fault of social media use. In fact, online forums offering support and advice about exam preparation can be very helpful in reducing exam stress. I agree that online pornography should be banned, but this is not something that social media encourages. Likewise, social media can be used to promote positivity about body image by encouraging and celebrating real people, rather than those we traditionally aspired towards on movie screens.

It is disappointing that your article does not offer a more balance evaluation of the role that social media plays in young people's lives. You have focused only on the dangers and down sides, ignoring the positive effect of social media on the live of teenagers. Social media allows teens to escape the stresses of their daily live, finding solace through communication with others who may be facing similar challenges. Similarly, suppose a group of astronomy enthusiasts meet online, they can form friendships, organise events and develop their shared interest. Social media has also become a crucial part of everyday life for many young people, allowing them to share information, arrange meetings and develop and celebrate social groups. Teenagers can stay connected, share experience, whilst also creating a record of their lives that can be reviewed and revisited. All of these things are surely positive benefits.

Ultimately, in the modern, technological era, teens must be allowed to use and enjoy social media. However, adults have a responsibility to educate young people to ensure that they learn how to use what is available to them with positivity and responsibility. I suggest you spend your time considering how this can be best achieved, rather than supporting an unjustifiable ban.

Yours sincerely

Moderator comment – Reading

Strengths:

- the candidate demonstrates a secure and mature understanding of the text and responds to most of the explicit and implicit points, as well as identifying inconsistencies with the author's arguments
- there is some successful evaluation of ideas and opinions. The candidate makes some sensible and thoughtful counterarguments to the author's points and there is some assimilation of ideas (e.g. fifth paragraph)
- overall, the candidate provides a 'thorough' response to the points in the text (Level 5).

Weaknesses:

- a general overview of the main points or arguments of the text has not been provided
- some points could have been developed in more depth and detail (e.g. fourth paragraph) which would help the candidate to respond in a 'developed' and 'sophisticated' way (Level 6).

A balancing of the strengths and weaknesses of this work suggests that a best fit mark just allows for a mark of 13, from the bottom of the Level 6 mark range, to be awarded.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if the candidate had fully developed all their points
- more marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if the candidate had covered more points from text (e.g. the author's point about the potential lack of development of conversational skills in young people).

Moderator comment – Writing

Strengths:

- the candidate demonstrates a secure understanding of audience and purpose
- the register and style are generally highly effective and a reasonably wide range of sophisticated vocabulary is used with confidence and precision (e.g. 'crucial', 'solace', 'intermittently')
- spelling, punctuation and grammar are almost always accurate
- sentences and arguments within the paragraphs are well sequenced and provide fluency of expression and thought.

Weaknesses:

- although the letter shows overall cohesion, with a good conclusion and appropriate closing valediction, there is some insecurity in structure in the way in which paragraphs are used
- the paragraphs are not tightly linked to each other, or the overall discussion. Paragraphs two to five could be rearranged without affecting the overall flow and meaning of the letter.

This piece of writing meets the criteria for Level 6 at the lower end of the mark range and should be awarded a mark of 13.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if the candidate had linked their paragraphs to the overall discussion and argument, and to each other, in a more effective and sophisticated way.

Mark awarded for reading = 13 out of 15

Mark awarded for writing = 13 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 26 out of 30

Assignment 1 – Example 2

www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10502106

Write a letter to Noelle McCarthy in response to her article 'Being different will only end in tears'.

Dear Ms McCarthy

I am writing to you in response to your article entitled 'Being different will only end in tears'.

Your views and experiences on the subject of bullying are both compelling and enlightening. The information you have used comparing bullies and wild animals depict an interesting contrast between the two differed species and I can see how you have come to your conclusions about the bullies acting as ''predators'' and the victims as ''prey''.

Within your article you portray that you believe that 'targets' should stick together. In my opinion I believe that bullies often pick on the pupils that are different from the crowd whether that be personality, certain characteristics or the physically weakened and the ones that do not fight back. These people often remain in small friendship groups as a small majority may share similar interests or hobbies. This gives the individuals a sense of comfort, belonging and safety. However, a bully will still be able to distinguish his prey accurately.

You also go on to say 'Don't stand out'. I would strongly disagree with this argument. How can a young adult fulfil and achieve anything in life, if that individual changes the way they act, because they are being bullied. As individuals we need to utilise our own ideas and thoughts to do what we think is right for ourselves and others. Our school repeats the idea of ''moral integrity'', doing what is right.

In order to help these individuals with the significant bullying problems within the education system, we as students, adults, teachers, mums and dads need to search for new solutions to prevent this matter and deal with the bullies in more effective and efficient ways. I understand that bullied victims should try and keep their distance, but they should not change the way they act just because of bullies. However, your comment 'Stand close enough to the target and you become one' suggest we should leave them to suffer. This comment portrays a cynical attitude towards the problem. I would argue that the struggling individuals should try and tackle the morally corrupt bully.

You also say a bullied victim should not stand out. I strongly disagree with this statement as I read recently of a teenager who was fighting his problems at school. The teenager entered a competition and was driven to be successful-which he was, he did this to prove the bullies wrong. The bullies then observed him in a different light and stopped their campaign against him. In my opinion this is a very inspiring story and shows courage to stand out and not hide in the shadows and to stand up to people that put you down.

I believe there are now fewer bullies amongst the education environment. I would say this is because the bullies are being dealt with in more efficient and advanced ways as I mentioned

earlier on. It has highlighted that the individuals that are most quiet and who stay a distance from trouble are clear to be the most vulnerable. I agree with the comment that you made when saying it is 'imperative' for all pupils to have a safe group; however, I would argue that pupils should aspire to be strong individuals also.

Comparatively 'lions, cheetahs, leopards and hyenas' are going to be significantly more confident, stronger and faster individuals, nevertheless human life is as divergent as it should be possible to identify the more obvious victims. I agree they do highlight the obvious victims but if they are working as an individual they are less likely to do real harm to the vulnerable victim.

In conclusion I would state that your conclusions and phrases are controversial but understandable. I believe if you are bullied it is comforting to find a close friendship group, but to also be themselves but to stand up to the bullies and most importantly, do not be frightened to ask for help and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Moderator comment – Reading

Strengths:

- the candidate mainly comments on explicit ideas and opinions and demonstrates some understanding of the key points in the text
- occasionally, the candidate hints at understanding implied meaning (e.g. fifth paragraph)
- the candidate provides an appropriate response which includes relevant ideas from the text.

Weaknesses:

- the candidate does not develop their points in sufficient detail to demonstrate a secure understanding of the more subtle aspects of the text, instead there is a tendency to make assertions or paraphrase the author's views rather than responding with detailed and developed points.

This response successfully meets the criteria for the middle of Level 4 and should be awarded a mark of 8.

Areas for improvement:

- a general overview of the main ideas or arguments of the text would help the candidate to demonstrate their understanding of the text
- a higher mark from Level 4 or above could have been achieved if the points made had been developed further, and if more implicit ideas and opinions had been identified and evaluated.

Moderator comment – Writing

Strengths:

- the candidate demonstrates an understanding of appropriate style and register for this type of writing
- the ideas and paragraphs are generally well sequenced and the selected vocabulary is adequate
- spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate.

Weaknesses:

- at times, clumsy or awkward expression is used which affects the clarity of the points being made and impacts on the overall quality and fluency of the writing (e.g. paragraphs two, three, six).

This work successfully meets the Level 4 criteria at the middle of the range and should be awarded a mid-level mark of 8.

Areas for improvement:

- a higher mark from Level 4 could have been awarded if expression was more tightly controlled and consistently clear in meaning.

Mark awarded for reading = 8 out of 15

Mark awarded for writing = 8 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 16 out of 30

Assignment 1 – Example 3

http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG3365065/Think-before-you-ink.html

Write a letter to Simon Mills in response to his article 'Think before you ink'.

8ᵗʰ May 2019

Dear Mr Mills,

I'm writing this to you as I have recently read your article about how you dislike the way various people enjoy covering their bodies with what you refer to be 'body graffiti' and 'ugly marks'. I would like to put out there that I very highly disagree with this ludicrous opinion of yours! People are entitled to do as they feel, meaning if someone wants to have multiple tattoos on their body, they can do so, and wherever on their body they want them.

I must admit, I personally don't pay much attention to the colours and designs people have printed on their body, but who the hell are you to publicly post an article that is aimed at certain people, with the urge to make them feel bad about themselves?

Do you not ever sit there and think maybe some people have all these tattoos because they have true meanings behind them? Or that it's a symbol of something? I have many relatives with tattoos and almost all of them have meaning behind them; they're a very pleasant and heart-warming way of showing your love or passion towards someone or something. Quite frankly, some people may see your silly little article as being rather offensive and disrespectful! Also, you stated "what's wrong with carrying around a photo?''. Can you seriously not see the difference? What if you were to lose this photo? What would you do then, you have lost that memory whereas if it's permanently printed onto you, then there is no chance that you're going to lose it! Not only that but getting something like that printed onto you makes it a part of you; a photograph could never become a part of you; it could belong to you but it has nowhere near as much value or meaning to it as a tattoo would.

You also implied that tattoos are an "all pain no gain, self-inflicted suffering" as well as a "lifetime of regret" and by the way you have written this article, I am lead to believe you do not have any tattoos of your own. So what I want to know is how you have the cheek to say that stuff like that! If you have never been through it yourself, how do you know what it feels like? I'm sure the people that own the tattoos see it in way more of a positive mind-set, as gorgeous memories that will remain on your skin.

What I'm mainly trying to get at is do not dare to downgrade people and talk negatively when you don't understand the feeling for yourself! Your article was nothing but you being selfish, thinking you can make people feel bad about their body choices!

I've covered everything that concerned me when reading your article, and I'm glad I've put my opinion across. Hopefully people won't take you seriously and start denying themselves they really want.

Yours sincerely,

Moderator comment – Reading

Strengths:

- the candidate shows some understanding of the text and selects and comments on a few explicit ideas and opinions
- there is some attempt to develop points.

Weaknesses:

- there is a tendency for the candidate to raise questions, or make assertions, rather than offering an explanation or exploration of the points that they have identified
- there is also a tendency for the candidate to focus on their feelings of indignation and annoyance about the author's views, which results in a general, rather than appropriate, response.

A mark 6 from the top of Level 3 should be awarded for this work.

Areas for improvement:

- marks from Level 4 could have been achieved if the candidate had focused more tightly on a wider range of ideas and opinions in the text instead of commenting on how annoying they found the author's views to be
- marks from Level 4 could have been achieved if the candidate had provided more developed and detailed comments about the points they had identified in the text.

Moderator comment – Writing

Strengths:

- the writing is generally well sequenced and the range of vocabulary is adequate
- most spelling is correct and, although there are some errors with punctuation and some clumsy expression, the work can be considered to be just about generally accurate
- the attacking, sometimes aggressive, tone of the writing is not appropriate for this type of writing and suggests insecurities with the candidate's understanding of style, audience, purpose and register.

This work meets the Level 4 criteria at the lower end of the mark range and should be awarded a mark of 7.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks could have been awarded from Level 4 if the candidate had adopted a more measured and thoughtful tone and style with their writing
- more marks could have been awarded from Level 4 if the candidate had engaged in a thorough process of proofreading in order to identify and correct errors with punctuation and grammar.

Mark awarded for reading = 6 out of 15

Mark awarded for writing = 7 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 13 out of 30

Assignment 1 – Example 4

www.waaytv.com/content/news/Do-video-games-lead-to-violence--474876133.html

Are Video games Containing Violence Appropriate for Children?

According to Whitney Decamp, violent video games are not the cause of violent behaviours, as his own studies shown "that playing video games, no matter how bloody, did not predict violent behaviours" and He goes further by suggesting that "violent video games may help reduce societal violence rather than increase it", with the only argument that "basically, by keeping young males busy with things they like, you keep them out of trouble". Now many studies has shown that children's behaviours are strongly influenced by the environment they are growing up in, specially a young children. A study has shown that "much conversation education is aimed Children, with the rationale that children influence the attitudes of their parents, who will consequently change their behaviors", and so a 13 year old (for example) who will play violent video games more than 6 hours per week (average in 2018) will definitely impact their mental health and will may reproduce what they have been doing in their free time on others (teen shouter for example, has America already has more than 100 teen shooting in the mid year of 2019). Despite the fact that children are in a bad environment mentally, video game shouldn't be using human beeing as a target or award point.

Another study in Australia, found that playing video games for too long before bed have adverse effects on your sleep, Dr. Michael Gradisar, sleep psychologist noted that when boys played for 150 mins they showed a 27 minute lost in total sleep time and 39 minute delay in sleep onset. A lack of sleep which has a consequent impact on children has their brains are still developing and so they need at least 9 hours of sleep for the recovery of the brain and better remembering of the information during the day. The lack of sleep could provoke less energy and less memory learned during the day. Michael Gradisar has also noted that "the REM sleep, also known as the dreaming sleep, was reduced by 12 minutes among the teens who played for two and a half hours." This may not seem like a significant reduction, but REM plays an important part for remembering the content learned during the day, and so for teenagers in their final years of school may not be the best idea.

Today almost all teenagers play violent video games, it obviously doesn't mean that all the teenagers are committing crimes, but a child who is weak mentally, and play video games where he is killing people and being rewarded for it could really be an invitation to violence. Where in the other hand people are horrified to hear that a school shooting occurs around their word, their very own child is playing violent video games where the purpose is to kill as many people as you can. The parents are more preoccupied with of thinking for the security of the kids, seeing them as a victim, where they could be the criminal. Despite the fact that

violence could have a negative influence on you, it reduces you're time of sleep, which could lead to fatigue and a lack of memories, and that's why violent video game should be taken more seriously. (Word count: 567)

Moderator comment – Reading

Strengths:

- the candidate identifies some explicit ideas and opinions in the text and makes a limited response to the points they have identified.

Weaknesses:

- responses to points in the text are limited and underdeveloped
- at times, there is some drifting of focus away from the text (e.g. second paragraph)
- there is a tendency to summarise or paraphrase the author's comments without comment or development of ideas or thoughts.

This work successfully meets the criteria for the top of Level 2 and should be awarded a mark of 4.

Areas for improvement:

- to achieve marks from the higher-level criteria the candidate should focus only on the points raised in the text
- to achieve marks from the higher-level criteria the candidate needs to identify and comment on a greater number of points from the text.

Moderator comment – Writing

Strengths:

- the tone is appropriate
- meaning is generally clear
- there is some attempt to use paragraphs to organise the writing.

Weaknesses:

- the candidate's writing style is limited and they rely heavily on words and quotes from the original text instead of using their own words and phrases
- the audience and purpose are unclear
- ideas are not developed or well sequenced for much of the writing and there is a lack of overall control
- there are persistent errors throughout the piece, especially with punctuation and the construction of sentences.

This work successfully meets the criteria for Level 2 and should be awarded a mark of 4.

Areas for improvement:

- to achieve marks from the higher-level criteria a clearer sense of audience and purpose needs to be established
- the candidate should strive to use their own words and phrases instead of relying heavily on the language used in the original text
- a process of careful proofreading should be carried out in order to identify and correct errors with sentence construction, punctuation and grammar.

Mark awarded for reading = 4 out of 15

Mark awarded for writing = 4 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 8 out of 30

3.2   Assignment 2

3.2.1 Writing to describe

Assignment 2 is a piece of **descriptive** writing between 500−800 words in length.

There are 10 marks available for 'Content and Structure' and 15 marks available for 'Style and Accuracy'. Please refer to Table C of the level descriptions for the former and Table D for the latter.

It is non-narrative.

The writing should be a coherent and connected series of developed ideas and images that build a successful and varied picture of the chosen point of focus.

Skills required for descriptive writing:

- Linguistic (creating pictures, atmosphere, and/or feelings)
- Structural (creating and ordering enough material to sustain interest and provide overall cohesion).

Descriptive writing gives opportunities to create images and to use a wide range of language, some of it complex; it is an exercise in creating atmosphere. Some of the work could be experimental (e.g. in the way images and ideas are combined or words juxtaposed). Description gives opportunities to write in the present tense. Good descriptive writing includes thoughts and feelings, people/characters, vocabulary used with precision for specific effect, sense of place/atmosphere, point of view/perspective, moment in time/overall structure and cohesion.

Ways to ensure that descriptive writing remains structured are (i) to structure the piece as if seeing from afar, walking towards, being in the middle, exploring further, going away; or (ii) structure as a contrast (e.g. everything is peaceful, the sudden chaos of the storm, the calm after the storm).

3.2.2 Some suitable types of work for Assignment 2

The piece of writing must be descriptive. A response that lapses into the narrative will be self-penalising.

Predominantly, the response will be in the form of a continuous piece of writing.

Focus on what is familiar

The temptation may be for candidates to want to choose an exotic location or a place they have only experienced through the media, but this is not a recommended strategy as it is usually unsuccessful. If the focus is to be a place, it is far better to choose one that is local and well-known.

A starting point may be for the teacher to ask their learners to undertake this exercise:

They should decide on a place to be described then close their eyes for one or two minutes to think about the chosen place. Once this time of reflection is over they should spend five minutes writing down as many ideas and images that describe the place as they can remember. These can be bullet-pointed or simply scribbled on the page.

If the learners know the place in sufficient detail this exercise will confirm their choices; if not, and their choices have been too adventurous, then an alternative is needed.

It is likely that learners will better engage when the choices are restricted to the local vicinity concerning:

(a) their own country; its most popular places, events and festivals

(b) their immediate area: their own village, town or city; their own neighbourhood

(c) their school or college: its buildings, facilities, population, events

It is important for learners to appreciate that a place they know well, and which they see and experience often, will not be so familiar to the moderator. What may seem unexciting and mundane to the candidate will not be to the moderator.

To be successful, candidates must describe the place in a way that allows the moderator to clearly imagine what has been described and to feel that he/she is there.

3.2.3 Examples of successful assignments

Examples of non-specific themes, e.g.

Descriptions of:

- busy places and atmospheres (markets, airports, train stations, beaches)
- quiet and beautiful places and atmospheres
- natural events such as sunrises and sunsets
- cities at night or as dawn breaks
- ugly places
- a moment when time stands still
- an event where there is a crowd
- a room where people are waiting
- hot places and cold places
- a sudden storm, hurricane, tornado, blizzard.

Examples of specific tasks, e.g.

Describe:

- a visit to the art museum/theatre/cinema/shopping mall
- your surroundings and your thoughts and feelings while waiting for a train/bus at the local station
- your school's sports day
- your perfect beach on a Saturday
- a busy market place on a busy day
- an important family celebration
- your first visit to a sports stadium
- your surroundings, thoughts and feelings on your first day at school
- your ideal place to spend a day off school
- your thoughts and feelings as you watch the sunrise/sunset.

It is important to understand that descriptions are rarely static. To describe 'a clearing in the wood' is difficult to sustain. It is therefore wise to write descriptions that take place over a very brief period of time or which involve some movement such as approaching a market, visiting a stall and leaving the place behind. You can describe a scene at dawn or as night falls, or the same place in summer and in winter. Such descriptions should not be confused with narratives, which take place over longer periods of time and have specific structures that are different from those of descriptions.

3.1.4 Key messages for choosing Assignment 2

- The more candidates have the chance to negotiate their choice of assignment, and the more original it is, the better the outcome will tend to be.
- The more successful descriptive pieces are based on personal experience, where a convincing overall picture is created by the development of images, familiar to the writer.

Assignment 2 – Example 1

Blue

Slowly, into the vast, blue ocean, the snow-white boat drifts on and on. From all directions, stillness emanates. An endless blue, so deep that you could fall for an eternity. The sudden sound of the engine excites the water, producing a bubbly froth. Reaching down dreamily, I scoop up the foam before blowing it towards the heavens, as if nature had drawn me a magnificent bubble bath. Froth trailed leisurely behind me as I cut the motor, drawing the boat to a stop – I decided to drift on the tide.

From here, a dark but faint line begins to emerge on the horizon. With the hypnotic, ceaseless rocking and bobbing of the boat, the line grows into a spectral vision of walls, roofs and spires. Off to the right, the needle-sharp steeple of an ancient church weaves itself into the sky's tapestry of clouds. A slow sequence of dings begins to ring out from the church bell, each ring resonating differently like voices in a church choir. A simple but sonorous sound.

As the boat gravitates shorewards, the spectral vision takes on the more solid form of a town, twinkling like a bright constellation of stars. Whilst the sun slowly sinks to the west, alluring sounds drift wondrously across the bay. Sounds that would wake any soul from their sleep – a slow and steady beat in rhythm with the beating of my heart. My heart beat increases in unison to the tempo. Voices of violins spring out in harmony. The lazy tune of trumpets, louder than their counterparts, complete this mesmerising symphony of sounds.

Drifting into the port, crowds gather, spilling from bars and cafes, clinking glasses, chattering vibrantly, laughing excitedly. Dressed in exquisitely-made clothes, silky and colourful, clicking their heels together and twirling, they dance round and round. Like the light froth at sea, sequins and gems of different sized embroidered elegantly into the fabric of men's suits, shine and sparkle against the dying sun. It is as if Michelangelo himself had waved his brush delicately, capturing the vibrancy of the colours, the vivacity of the atmosphere and the variety of the dance, creating this tableau of beauty.

The dancing is graceful, almost hypnotic: I find myself watching in awe – the faint swishing of the women's skirts rings out in unison with the music and the beating drums. They step carefully and precisely over each other's feet, heels clamping down upon the ground in perfect synchronisation to drums and dancers. With the dancers spinning wildly, the spectators buzz with laughter which peels out, bouncing from person to person with contagious joy.

One couple stands out from the troupe. The man, leading masterfully, is dressed in a cobalt-blue tailcoat and antique silver waistcoat made of fine Chinese silk, his shirt a pearly white.

His well-polished shoes, reflecting the coloured lights at their tips, dexterously tap the sandstone beneath. His partner, similarly adorned in a rich ocean-blue silk dress, the bodice an emerald-green, moves in harmony, the sliver ribbons laced into her fiery red hair whispering longingly in her wake. As the blues, purples and greens flash by, the peacock-couple melts away into the sea of dancers.

Soon, it becomes dark, and still the dancing continues. I turn my attention back to my immediate surroundings. The sea now reflects an absence of colour in the sky, but for the bright, twinkling stars which endure, reminiscent of the sequins and gems sprinkled on the dancers' clothes. Gentle ocean-ripples mimic the continuous flow of the women's skirts. A now-full-moon sits prominently in the sky, observing with a benevolent envy of the freedom of the dancers.

I reluctantly climb below-deck, stricken by the water's reflection glimmering upon the sheets of my makeshift bed. Slowly, seamlessly, I sink down into the last echoes of music. The lazy tune of the trumpets and the unique soprano of the violin refuse to succumb to the evening's end, enchanting my soul, and sending me into a tranquil slumber.

(Word count: 661)

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the candidate provides many well-defined ideas and images and creates an engaging and convincing description of a boat journey to a busy town
- descriptions of the boat journey, the arrival at the town, and the music and dancers provide a variety of focus
- the action and excitement of events in the town are realistic and create an effective contrast to the sense of tranquillity the narrator feels when on the boat
- paragraphs are carefully managed to signpost the reader through the narrator's journey.

Weaknesses:

- some of the images were not always convincing (e.g. the linking of the 'swishing' of the women's skirts to the idea of them ringing in paragraph five).

This work meets the criteria for Level 6 and should be awarded a mark of 9.

Areas for improvement:

- full marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if there was a greater consistency in the selection and use of images for specific effect.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- most of the vocabulary is well chosen and used with precision to create specific effect
- the candidate has made an effective use of varied sentence structures and there is a consistent use of an appropriate register throughout the work
- overall, the writing is almost always accurate.

Weaknesses:

- although there is a good use of language, at times it is a little overworked and slightly laboured (e.g. the moon's 'benevolent envy' of the dancers in the seventh paragraph)
- there are a few errors which could have been corrected by careful proofreading (e.g. a missing full stop at the end of the second sentence and 'peels' in the fifth paragraph).

This work meets the criteria for Level 6 and should be awarded a mark of 13.

Areas for improvement:

- higher marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if the candidate had selected and used vocabulary with greater precision and effect.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 9 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 13 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 22 out of 25

Assignment 2 – Example 2

The Bunya Mountains

It was a day of blistering heat. Gleaming streaks of gold seeped through slits in the leaves of towering Eucalyptus trees and lit up the otherwise dry and mundane landscape that outskirts an area like an audience surrounding a stage. The seamless transition from a baked, ordinary wilderness into a luscious subtropical rainforest attracts the countless crowds of eager faces. The Bunya Mountains – a monumental spine of mountains lying down over the lower coastal regions of Queensland. The amplitude of peaks and valleys inside this wondrous national park ignites the souls of people through unimaginable frenzy and excitement.

Final glimpses of bright blue skies and open fields dissipate as if being swallowed by the dome-shaped Bunya pines that majestically dominate overhead. Waving your last goodbyes to the modern world, the show begins. The drums of crunching gravel and dirt, the faint trumpets from forest birds, chimes of rustling leaves and scurrying of small creatures in the nearby bushes form the overture. Soft harmonies from distant warbling birds echo while an incredible performance is conducted by human admiration of the picturesque environment. While being embraced by long overhanging branches and roping vines, the first verse begins. As you step into the entrance of this immersive grand hall, the curtains of tangled branches open. Graceful smiles from others passing, the complimentary scents of flowers and the tone of susurrate leaves swaying with the wind, creates a feeling of contentment and ease.

Journeying deeper into the darkening oasis of nature, the once surrounding world becomes obsolete. With the sunlight diminishing and heat contesting to break through the density of the forest canopy, the sudden cool moisture of air triggers chills of astonishment as you continue to trek along the now overgrown pathway. Massive guardians appear with solid steel helmets and heavy body armour, holding their indestructible swords and shields, poised ready to protect this ancient sanctuary. These colossal hollow trees engulfed by parasitic strangler figs begin to crowd the forest floor with the sporadic sounds of clashing weapons. Ancient and weathered through treacherous competition, chunks of the mighty structures no longer exist – as if they had been destroyed through a ferocious battle between species. All that remains is the heroic aftermath. It leaves behind a home for various ecosystems that embraces any wanderers into a local community of bark, hanging sticks and brown foliage.

Beyond the battlefield, the soothing sonority of flowing water accompanies the sweet sounds of rustling leaves and eerie hums from territorial birds, introducing an entirely new environment. A place of cool air to the skin and mossy green saturation – the heart of the forest where the sky no longer has the strength to break through the dense layers of forest canopy like a thick blanketing of shade to the entirety of this celestial world. Here in the deepest depths of this fantasyland lies the true essence of peace and tranquillity.

Reluctantly, the time comes to hike back up the ranges of mountains and valleys. The unique and intriguing landscape across the entire pathway envelops any adventurers in a warm embrace through the glamour of their odd shapes. Like alchemists brewing supernatural potions, scents are emitted by small shoots of brightly coloured abstract flowers. The neighbouring and overgrown fields of blue, green and yellow, glimmer in the sunshine and sway solemnly with the wind as your journey through peace and isolation comes to an end. The birds in the distance sing the evening melodies and the trickling, silver streams of water reflect the strong sunlight that finally begins to reappear through the slits in the leaves of the towering Eucalyptus trees. The temperature hits you as if crossing the border from Antarctica to the Sahara Desert. It transforms back to the dusty and sweltered state as if it had never gone anywhere. Finally, after forever, the open space and never-ending views of landscape comes back to meet the eye and abruptly admits you into your familiar home planet once again.

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the content is developed, engaging and effective and the candidate has provided frequent well-chosen images and details which give a mostly convincing picture (e.g. the extended metaphors of a musical show in paragraph two and an army in paragraph four)
- the overall structure is well-managed with the use of well linked paragraphs which guide the reader through the narrator's journey into a subtropical rainforest
- the candidate successfully creates a sense of atmosphere and place.

Weaknesses:

- there are a few clumsy or awkward sentences which sometimes impacts on cohesion within paragraphs (e.g. the second sentence in the opening paragraph and the second sentence in the final paragraph).

This writing successfully meets all the criteria for Level 5 and should be awarded a mark of 8.

Areas for improvement:

- the candidate could have achieved marks from Level 6 if they had achieved greater overall cohesion in all paragraphs.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- most of the vocabulary used by the candidate is precise and used for specific effect
- a range of mostly effective sentences are used
- spelling, punctuation and grammar are mostly accurate.

Weaknesses:

- at times there is a slight tendency to overwork language (e.g. amplitude, susurrate)
- there are occasions where sentences are overlong, which impacts on the overall effect on the reader (e.g. second sentence in the fourth paragraph)
- although most errors are minor, the shifting from past tense in the first paragraph to present tense in the subsequent paragraphs should be considered to be quite serious.

Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of this piece, a best fit mark from the top of Level 5 should be awarded for this work.

Areas for improvement:

- the candidate could have gained marks from Level 6 if they had been more precise with their vocabulary choices, shown greater control with their sentence structures and used the same tense for the whole of the piece.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 8 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 12 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 20 out of 25

Assignment 2 – Example 3

Center Parcs-Favourite Place

A large, wooden door stands imposingly while all around parents are trying to keep their young, eager and excited children under control as they walk through.

To the left stands a lonely shop with no one I it except for a single person, the cheery cashier. Colourful towels; swimming costumes; flip flops and goggles are all arranged immaculately in size order. Indeed, who would touch such perfect displays? Straight ahead stand the doors that welcome everyone in before they step into the colourful changing rooms. The doors are like sauna doors: frames, plastic handles and a steamy glass centre with light streaming through the once clear window, like the sun on a midsummers day. Walking through the doors, feet encounter a slippery ice rink. Hundreds of identical yellow changing cubicles brighten up the room like a stream of gold. Grey towel dryers line the wall and soon people will be queuing up, waiting to use them. Walking through to the pool side, another little shop invites customers to buy their photos; there are many frames to choose from: frames with colourful fish, aqua blue, glass frames and more.

The pool is massive. Caribbean trees give an exotic feel and the domed roof traps the tropical heat and captures the glare of the daylight sun. The pool is restless with masses of people; every shape, size and age is represented, wearing a colourful array of swim wear.

Tarzan's voice calls, screaming 'Argh' very loudly, then the mighty waves start. Screams of fear and delight echo as the slopping water pulls everyone under the water with their humongous force. Large pulsing waves with white crests stand tall, with hundreds of heads bobbing in the swell. Excitement is building as the whirlpool sounds, turning round and round in big circles. On the pool sides, the plants stand upright, green leaves, black and brown trunks suggesting a jungle. The rocks too sit firm with their rounded, shiny surfaces glistening and wet. The sun strolls in through the glass dome; it is a bright summer's day. Adults relax comfortably in the tropical heat hot tub, while their children dive like Olympic swimmers into deep, breath taking pool.

Fast-flowing water is forcing them down the flume, with twists and turns; tossing them from side to side. Glowing stars light up ahead of them inside the newest slide of them all: the Typhoon. Steep stairs require you to hike up if you want to jump on the hectic ride. Shiny tubes glow enticingly, holding the attention of the waiting individuals. People chat loudly, some shivering while they await their go on the ride. There are different sounds to choose from to make your time on this thrilling ride as memorable as possible. Lighting is also an option, ranging from bright to dark. Big yellow inflatables made for one or two people are provided to make your journey down this speedy slide swift and fun.

Bumpy and smooth slides are also an option, they plunge vertically down in toe the deep plunge pool, bringing smiles to everyone's faces. Screams of joy echo around the poolside as each child and grownup rush down, having the time of their lives. With rapid drops is the Tropical cyclone with personalised lighting – a long flowing tube with short and sharp turns.

Around the pools are restaurants and bars where people sit for a break from the water. Colourful, bright and fruity flavoured slush drinks are a refreshing joy after a fun-filled day in the crystal water. Happy staff, pleased to help buzz around the café. The smell of chlorine slowly drifts away and is replaced with the delightful smell of hot dogs! A range of food from chips to sandwiches is available. People's mouths begin to water in anticipation of their food.

Children scream as they jump into the deep pool, getting chlorine into their tiny and now red eyes that also makes their noses run like a cold on a bitter winter's day. Chlorine taints their tiny little mouths. Slides run into the distance and splashes are heard from miles away. Rocks and trees standing up right giggle with excitement at how much fun everyone is having. The wind is blowing a gentle and delightful breeze, sending chills down everyone's spines. Cries of laughter echo around the huge room, whilst the Tarzan Call, only lasting for a few seconds, fills the air. The poolside is a zoo!

The hyperactive children run around the pool but they slip and slide dangerously, attracting the attention of the life guard. A sea of happy faces and loud voices fill the air, and cheerful parents watch their children play. The pool is boisterous, with lots of things going on, people screaming, people shouting and people laughing. The noise echoes back and forth around the done assaulting ears. Everyone is having the time of their life, making many happy memories.

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the candidate has provided a selection of relevant ideas and details, including a few images (e.g. the personification of the 'restless' pool and 'pulsing waves')
- paragraphs are used to organise the writing and there is some development of content within paragraphs (e.g. the description of the pool in paragraph four).

Weaknesses:

- at times, some of the description is quite straightforward (Level 3) and there is a tendency to 'tell' rather than 'show' the reader the imagined scene
- the piece lacks some overall cohesion which suggests some insecurity with structure
- paragraphs tend to provide snapshots of different aspects of the leisure complex and most could be interchanged without affecting the overall meaning of the work. This impacts on the overall cohesion of the work.

Although there are some aspects of Level 3 writing in this work, the candidate also meets the Level 4 criteria well enough to award a best fit mark from the bottom of Level 4.

Areas for improvement:

- higher marks could have been awarded if the candidate had included more effective imagery
- the candidate could have achieved more marks if they had developed the content of each paragraph in more depth and detail
- more marks could have been awarded if greater overall cohesion had been achieved by a careful linking of paragraphs.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- the candidate uses some precise vocabulary (e.g. 'immaculately', 'array', 'anticipation')
- there is an attempt to provide a range of sentences for effect (e.g. listing)
- an appropriate register is used for much of the writing.

Weaknesses:

- the candidate includes quite a lot of straightforward or simple language (Level 3) which tends to offset the impact of the some of the more precisely used higher-level language
- the use of listing within some sentences is not always effective in creating a sense of place or atmosphere because the language used tends to be fairly straightforward or simple (e.g. in paragraphs two, three and five)
- there is quite a high frequency of simple sentences which affects the overall quality and impact of the writing (Level 3)
- the use of the second person in paragraph five does not quite fit with the generally appropriate register used for the rest of the work
- there are quite a lot of punctuation errors and there is insecurity with the construction of some sentences (e.g. the final sentence of paragraph six). However, meaning is nearly always clear and errors are not always serious, so the accuracy levels can be classed as just meeting the Level 4 criteria of 'generally accurate, but with some errors'.

Although this work meets some of the criteria for Level 3, there is enough evidence to show that it also meets some of the Level 4 criteria. When balancing the strengths and weaknesses of this piece it would be appropriate to award a best fit mark from the bottom of Level 4.

Areas for improvement:

- marks from higher up the Level 4 mark range could have been awarded if the candidate had used a wider range of precise vocabulary and carefully proofread their work to identify and correct punctuation and grammar errors.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 5 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 7 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 12 out of 25

Assignment 2 – Example 4

Derby Disaster

The roar of the crowd teared down the back streets of the town. The sound could be heard for miles. It was Aston Villa Vs Blues! The match everyone had been waiting for. The fans were going wild.

The stadium was huge. At full capacity, it holds 50,000 people. The grass was a healthy looking green. When you walked into the stadium, you felt a feeling of excitement. It was thirty minutes until kick off and the crowd was on edge. It was a hot day and every one was ready for the match of the year.

The two teams began to walk out onto the pitch. Everyone was cheering and singing. The atmosphere between the rival fans was tense; it could be cut with a knife. The teams shook hands whilst giving each other evil looks. The players jogged into their positions as the referee blew the whistle with a piercing shrill. The game started. The teams started playing, you could see the rivalry between them and there were already a few bad tackles.

The police were all around the stadium stopping the fans from getting to each other. This is the biggest football rivalry in England. Messi goes in for a shocking tackle on Ronaldo and took his legs from him. You could hear bones cracking and loud screams pierced the stadium as both players crashed to the ground. A huge fight broke out between the two teams and there was blood everywhere. The medical staff ran onto the field to support the injured players, resulting in Ronaldo coming off the field on a stretcher.

His pain was obvious as tears streamed down his face. His legs where broken. Was this the end of his career? Four players got red carded for fighting and were sent off the field meaning a three match ban. Even the managers and coaches were arguing on the side line. The fans were going wild; they were all chanting abuse at each other. There were fireworks exploding in the stands and people throwing bottles onto the pitch. Outside of the stadium, some fans stood around dejectedly without purpose, while others were fired up and ready for a fight – to take on the authorities.

There was a flicker of blue and the howl of a siren speeding along the A37 ring road towards the stadium. The hapless fans massed together again, chanting, shouting, screaming. As the lone vehicle approached, it was surrounded and eaten up by the anger of the crowd.

Rock, rock, smash, boom!

The ambulance was turned over and the contents spewed onto the street. The fans got their revenge; living out their anger on the little vehicle that had come to heal. THEY FELT LIKE THE WINNERS!

Unknown to them, their actions led to the most horrific loss possible; the players were dying.

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the candidate provides a series of relevant but straightforward details
- there is some attempt to develop the description
- structure is mostly organised and leads to a conclusion.

Weaknesses:

- although there is some attempt to develop the description it is not always realistic or convincing (e.g bones cracking in paragraph four and players dying in the final paragraph)
- the candidate 'tells' the reader about the imagined scene instead of 'showing' them with the use of imagery and carefully selected vocabulary
- although the structure is mostly organised, the conclusion is weak and the paragraphing is not always effective.

This work just meets the criteria for the top of Level 3 and should be awarded a mark of 4.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks could have been achieved if the candidate had provided more convincing or realistic details, and if they had organised their work more effectively.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- the candidate uses simple or functional vocabulary for most of the piece
- there is some attempt to vary sentences for effect (e.g. paragraphs eight and nine)
- there are also some attempts to use punctuation for effect (e.g. exclamation marks and semi-colons).

Weaknesses:

- although there is an attempt to vary sentences for effect, the candidate repeatedly uses simple sentences, which results in a generally simple overall register
- the attempt to use punctuation for effect is limited in its success and suggests insecurity in the candidate's understanding of how to use punctuation
- at times, errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar are frequent and serious enough meet the Level 2 criteria.

There are elements of Level 2 criteria in this work but, because the candidate shows some understanding of the context and demonstrates some attempt to use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, they just meet the criteria for the bottom of Level 3. This means that a best fit mark of 5 is appropriate for this work.

Areas for improvement:

- to gain higher marks the candidate needs to demonstrate a greater security in their understanding of how to use punctuation, vocabulary and paragraphs for different purposes and effects.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 4 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 5 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 9 out of 25

3.3 Assignment 3

3.3.1 Writing to narrate

The purpose of Assignment 3 is to produce a piece of narrative writing of 500–800 words in length.

Assessment 3 is assessed using Table C for Composition: Content and Structure (10 marks) and Table D Composition: Style and Accuracy (15 marks). It is important to assess the correct level first, then decide on a mark within the level.

Narratives may be written in any relevant form. Features of fiction writing should be evident, such as, but not restricted to, description, characterisation and convincing detail. These should be incorporated into a defined and structured plot. Ideas should be explored and developed imaginatively; it is worth remembering that a story that entertains is normally a successful one.

3.3.2 Some suitable types of work for Assignment 3

Fiction

Stories that:

- create suspense and atmosphere

- explore relationships and emotions

- are about adventure and achievement

- contain unexpected events or result in unusual outcomes

- invent contrasting characters facing critical situations in which right triumphs over wrong, fortune over misfortune, etc.

- are about confrontations and their outcomes

- are about journeys and what happens on the way.

All offer possibilities for addressing specific readers and maintaining the reader's interest and engagement (e.g. by creating suspense, or by the careful choice of language) and adopting a distinctive voice for the narrator.

Skills required to write fiction include:

- structural (providing characters and details that later become significant; flashbacks;   time lapses; different types of beginning and end)

- descriptive/linguistic (providing pictures to clarify and words that define)

- imaginative (providing storylines that are gripping but realistic; selecting essential details which are relevant to the aim of the story; creating interesting dialogue that fulfils a function).

A fiction-based assignment may usefully follow a study of the conventions of fiction: the ability to create characters, to manipulate plot and to use language to convey pictures, thoughts and feelings – these offer challenge at the highest level.

Teachers should beware that without preliminary teaching and discussion, candidates may easily produce poor pieces of fiction for example: stories that include improbable and exaggerated events (including stories of   gratuitous violence and visits to haunted houses); stories which offer a series of events without development of character, setting or stylistic language choices, understated as if they are scripts for documentary programmes; stories that are muddled with poor or illogical links between events and details in different parts of the narrative. Plots may be weak, with badly managed climaxes and insubstantial, ill-thought-out endings. Stories that contain too many characters tend to be unsuccessful too.

Often the best short stories are based on a single plot idea, have a maximum of two main characters (sometimes one is even more appropriate) and are set in places familiar to the writer.

Personal writing

Stories about (for example):

- an event concerning a relative

- the growth or failure of a relationship

- an event that is testing and stressful, but ends in success

- a visit to a challenging place, e.g. a surgery or a hospital

- an early memory from one's schooldays

- the holiday of a lifetime, or one that does not work out

- a serious disagreement

- moving to a new place

- events of importance, such as the birth of a sibling or an illness.

An audience for the writing can be specific. Many candidates write for themselves, but they might think of relatives, peers or even teachers. They often write to clear their own minds or to communicate privately with others of their own choosing.

Skills required for personal writing:

- writing selectively, since real life events, or those that echo real life, include details that are not relevant to the point of the story (their inclusion can be mundane and slow down the action)

- adding interest by describing, as if writing fiction

- interweaving genuine thoughts and emotions, possibly with action and changes of setting.

Diaries

Relating an event or series of events seen from different moments in time can be very effective. This is usually achieved in the form of several diary entries. Diaries provide an appropriate voice that contributes to the communication of events and feelings and provide a coherent structure and opportunities for development despite the conventions of form. If the content is challenging ('This is the most difficult letter I have ever had to write...') and the candidate uses the form to demonstrate assurance of style and register, structure of sentences and range of language, the writing is often of a high standard.

3.3.3 Examples of successful assignments

Fiction

- The story of a lighthouse keeper
- Whisper in the bedroom
- The voice in my head
- Just in the nick of time
- The door in the wall
- Write a narrative piece in which the following words appear 'and now he must live with that feeling forever'. When this type of task is set the words can appear at any point in the response but must be used appropriately and/or seamlessly in the context of the narrative to be successful.

Personal writing

- A day with Grandfather
- A day I will never forget
- My first day at school
- The worst/best day of my life
- Write a fictional account of a life-changing event
- Write an autobiographical account of an important event

Candidates should be aware that some poetic licence is acceptable when writing personal accounts and just because the voice in the story is their own it doesn't mean the events have to be true or accurately related. It is the quality of the writing that should be considered the most significant criteria for a successful assignment.

3.3.4 Key messages for choosing Assignment 3

- Study examples of fiction before setting stories. This could be linked to the study of the candidates' Literature in English course.

- Encourage stories about the whole range of human experience, the tragic and the upsetting as well as good and happy events.

- Ensure that candidates understand the difference between and function of description and narrative. (In effect the difference between Assignment 2 and Assignment 3 respectively).

- Give candidates opportunities to show the appropriate range of their vocabulary.

Assignment 3 – Example 1

ART CONSUMES ME

I took a deep sip of my Earl Grey, smiling to myself at the fact I was aesthetic enough to drink the stuff. Rain pounded at the window before me. It was quiet in the cafe, empty but for a few last-minute coffees before a night out on the town. Flipping through the paper to the entertainment pages, contentment rested over me. I had finally made it; my work was on exhibition.

I scanned the page looking for anything pertaining to my collection. A small box of text caught my eye, "Delilah's exhibit is a prime example of our world's lack of creativity and adventure." Everyone knows call out culture is best ignored, but it's different when it's you. I had to know ...

> "This newest exhibit has had a profound effect on the Brooklyn art scene, but what does it really say about the person behind the canvas? Her simplistic style has gained a lot of praise for its freshness, but it's hardly new. Last year, African-American artist, Moesha Moore, used the same style (as a protest) at her art show in the wake of the Stephan Clark shooting. Delilah's use of this technique is not only offensive to the entire black community, but shows that, while her art is technically skilled, it does not possess any kind of originality, which art needs to be effective ... ".

Ouch. The words in front of me blurred a little and I wiped a stray tear from my cheek. I took in a deep breath, but it came out shaky. Glancing down, I saw my tea had splattered over the rim of the cup into the saucer. I needed air. Struggling to regain composure, I walked towards the door.

"Oi, your check" the waitress barked.

"Sorry, sorry" I mumbled, throwing down a hundred dollar note. Without waiting for change, I stumbled out into the night.

..

Everything felt like it was imploding. My heart pounded incessantly. It felt like the ultimate failure. I'd spent my life working up to this point and now it was worthless. Rage and frustration boiled through me. I sunk to my knees, tears splattering from my eyes. The wood stung beneath me, but I didn't care. Years of desperately trying to become something fell onto my shoulders. Self-doubt swung at me like a hammer. How could I have been so naive to think that I had talent? I could just picture my parents' faces. "We told you not to go into art. It's just not a proper profession, and it looks like you proved us right; you're terrible at that too." A weird burning sensation came over my body and I laughed bitterly.

Shuffling along up the stairs on hands and knees I made it to my bedroom. I stared around the darkened room. I moved over to the chair at my easel and began to paint. Looking out of the window I simply painted what I saw. Street lights, shop signs. I got lost in the stroke of my brush. Time lost its meaning. A fog settled over my brain, and yet everything was so sharp. The work drew me in. Moving maniacally, I fell into a rhythm. My face split into a smile as I floated into a dream-like state. Existence had a distinct thickness. Their expressions those of an emperor. I didn't know where my mind ended and my body began anymore. Inside my head scenes rolled past so fast like on a road trip through the countryside; all the fields the same, but each with their own differences, and everything moving so fast you can't keep track. Swells of nausea rose over me. I wanted to document all of it. My arms ached with the strain of trying to keep up. All my senses had mixed into one. They swirled around me like I was living inside them, consuming me. I was outside my body looking in. By this point, I think was eating the paint, but I couldn't be sure. Everything felt like nothing, and nothing felt like everything.

..

The sun blazed through the window. It burnt, but in a good way. I cracked open my eyes. They screamed in protest. The scene before me was terrifying, yet somehow also … There was paint everywhere. It had fallen over and covered the floor. Every canvas in the room held some creation. And then there were the walls. Floor to ceiling, they were covered with colour. Places I was sure should be unreachable. I fell back in awe. It was stunning, and yet so bizarre. Colours assaulted my senses. The wall lit up with dragons – red, green, and gold.

Seemingly random lines of fluorescent paint streaked through the bulk of the complex designs. The top left-hand corner of the room was sprinkled with speckles of deep midnight blue.

I yanked open the curtains to get a better look at my design. Sunlight filled the space. It held an attribute my art never had; it was free. I breathed out the strain my heart had felt over the last few days. Catching sight of myself in the mirror, I smiled a genuine smile. Nothing mattered so much anymore. Bubbles of laughter erupted from me. I went to reign myself in but stopped. No one was here. I let the laughter take over. My body shook and I rolled about the floor. *If they wanted adventure,* I vowed to myself, *that's sure as hell what they were going to get.*

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the candidate creates a convincing and well-defined character in which the thoughts and feelings of the narrator are clear to the reader
- the writing effectively explores the narrator's complex and all-consuming relationship with art, which links well to the title of the piece
- the reader is guided through the narrator's journey of self-understanding and ends with an effective and convincing climax
- structure is generally secure.

Weaknesses:

- although the structure is generally secure, there are moments when the reader is unsure of time and place (e.g. it is not clear where narrator is in paragraph seven, 'Seemingly random lines, …'. And the reference to stairs at the beginning of paragraph five, 'Shuffling along up the stairs…' is a little unclear and slightly confusing).

This work successfully meets the Level 6 criteria and should be awarded a mark from the bottom of that level.

Areas for improvement:

- the candidate could have gained full marks from Level 6 if they had ensured that all paragraphs were carefully linked so that the reader was in no doubt of changes in time or place.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- the candidate maintains a consistent and well-chosen register throughout the piece
- the use of a different register for the comments by the art critic is effective and successful
- vocabulary is wide-ranging and generally successful in creating specific effect (e.g. 'stray tear', 'colours assaulted', 'bubbles of laughter')
- the candidate makes use of varied sentence structures for specific effect (e.g. in paragraphs five and seven)
- spelling, punctuation and grammar are nearly always accurate.

Weaknesses:

- although the candidate makes a good use of wide-ranging vocabulary, there are times when the vocabulary choices don't quite work and the intended effect is not always successful (e.g. 'tears splattering', 'wood stung')
- some sentences are slightly awkward or clumsy (e.g. opening sentence of paragraph five)
- although spelling, punctuation and grammar are nearly always accurate there are some insecurities with punctuation (e.g. direct speech) and errors with spelling (e.g. 'reign' in the final paragraph).

This work meets the Level 6 criteria and, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the piece, a mark from the middle of that level should be awarded.

Areas for improvement:

- the candidate could have gained more marks from Level 6 if they have been more careful and precise with their selection of vocabulary
- more marks could have been awarded if the candidate had engaged in a thorough and careful process of proofreading to identify and correct errors with sentences, punctuation and spelling.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 9 out of 10
Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 14 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 23 out of 25

Assignment 3 – Example 2

Descriptive narrative coursework

Terrible weather made the atmosphere dim. Whistling through the trenches and right into the soldiers' pale skin were sharp, biting winds. Pouring raindrops hit the soldiers' helmets, and large thundering noises made them shiver during the night. Every sound made them tense in anticipation.

David remembered that spring morning just a few months ago when he had got up at five. It was the day he would be going off to war. He had to say goodbye to his mother, who would now be left alone: his brother and his dad had already gone to the battlefield. They had left as soon as they could, imagining a world of wealth, fame, power and prestige after the war. David was not as ignorant or naïve as them, and knew that the war could be the last thing he would ever see. Still, he needed to go. He had promised his dad, man to man.

Now, he stood with the few hundred others that had left the training camp and come to the front last night. Everything was silent. David could hear that some men were frightened, some were full of expectations, and others were completely blank minded. But they all had their own goals. They wanted to perform heroic deeds and gain power in their country when they had won the war. David felt like the only one whose goal was to go back home.

Everyone was waiting for the captain's order to shoot. They were all tense, and the only sound they could hear was their own harsh breathing.

Suddenly, the enemies started their attaches. Dusty bullets ripped through the air, and at that moment, it was as if each one was a fragment of the devil himself. Close to David, a bullet pierced through a man's shoulder, and he collapsed backwards, eyes fluttering in pain. The stuttering of the bullets was ceaseless, and for a mad moment. David wondered if it would ever end. Each and every one of the soldiers immediately gave up their grand goal of becoming a war hero – the only common goal left was to survive – hopefully with all their body parts attached. All of them were praying with all their hearts that they would last another day.

"Fire!" shouted the captain. "Fire!" There will be no retreat this time! Victory or death. Shoot!"

For a few seconds, everything was a mass of confusion as the soldiers tried to work out their correct positions. Their faces were pale and their hands were sweaty. But soon, they were all killing. They needed to save their own lives first.

___

Having somehow miraculously survived, he sat in the muddy trenches and wished desperately to return home. He couldn't find his brother or his father. He was furious. Why did they want him to experience the war? It was too harsh for him. He wanted to see his mother. He wanted to tell her everything. All he had was his new friend Simon. They had met in the training camp, and had become very close instantly. They were both eighteen and needed someone to depend on. They were young and tender-hearted, and a great comfort to each other.

For the next four nights, David stayed in the trenches, fearful, listening to the sounds of the guns. Every morning, he had to go out to the dugout to fight again. His first day of war had been the most horrible and shocking day of his life, but by now he was resigned to the horror. David was alive, but he mourned for the ones that had died. Simon had been shot, and David would never see him again. He had nightmares of the battlefield every night. He was full of pain. His eyes were constantly filled with tears.

David was done blaming his family. Now, he was starting to blame the country. All of the things that the government assured the men were lies. No one was grieving for the men that died in battle. Innumerable men were butchered every day and the truth was that no one cared or even knew that they had died.

Men's feet sunk down into the sludge. Thunderous bullets whizzed beside soldiers' ears, missing them by millimetres. Falling bodies were covered with blood, trickling down them in the rain. Guns roared ferociously. Soldiers stumbled and fell over the dead bodies which were piling up, second by second. The shooting started again, but this time, it was different. The soldiers didn't have the strength to get up again. Men were crawling on the muddy ground, their arms trembling with fear and exhaustion. Soldiers collapsed one by one.

Suddenly, something happened. A cloudy gas had become visible in the trenches.

''Get out! Get out!'' screamed the captain who saw the gas bomb first. But it was too late to escape. Many men were exhausted and those who succeeded in climbing up the trenches were shot. Foggy gas filled the air so quickly that soon, it only had only one left to kill.

''Victory!'' shouted the head of the enemies, thrilled. His troops were ecstatic. David shivered desperately, and soon he was writhing on the floor screaming and crying out for grace to God.

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the content is relevant with some development of plot
- there are some features of narrative writing, such as the setting of scene and characterisation
- the reader gains an insight into David's character and can appreciate his initial reluctance to enlist and subsequent anger in response to the realities of war
- structure is generally well managed (e.g. the passage of time is made clear to the reader and there is some linking of events to earlier in the story; for example, paragraph ten links back to paragraph eight).

Weaknesses:

- the ending is a little weak and inconclusive which leaves the reader feeling slightly dissatisfied
- the use of short paragraphs (e.g. fourth and twelfth paragraphs) do not add to the development or interest of the story
- the quite frequent repetition of 'David' throughout the piece hints at some insecurity with structure.

Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the work, a best fit mark from the top of Level 4 would be appropriate for this piece of writing.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks could have been awarded if the candidate had demonstrated a greater security with structure
- marks could have been awarded if the candidate had developed the character and plot in more depth and detail.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- the candidate uses vocabulary with some precision and for specific effect (e.g. 'sharp, biting winds', 'stuttering of the bullets') and on the whole vocabulary use is quite successful
- there is an attempt to use a range of sentence structures to create specific effect
- generally, the candidate adopts an appropriate register for the context
- spelling, grammar and punctuation are generally accurate.

Weaknesses:

- the overuse of simple sentences in some parts of the writing impacts on the fluency and intended effect of the writing (e.g. paragraphs nine and ten)
- the quite frequent repetition of 'David' affects fluency and style and detracts from the overall enjoyment of the piece
- although the writing can be classed as generally accurate, there are some errors with spelling, grammar and punctuation which could have been identified and corrected by careful proofreading.

A balance of the strengths and weaknesses of this piece suggests that a best fit mark from the middle of Level 4 would be appropriate for this work.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks could have been awarded if the candidate had varied their use of sentences more effectively, written in a more fluent and less stilted style and carefully proofread their work to identify and correct errors.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 6 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 8 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 14 out of 25

Assignment 3 – Example 3

You are stuck on an island after the ship you were travelling on capsized. Narrate how you survive on the island and get help to rescue you, and how the experience changed you.

Survival

It's all really a hazy picture in my mind. I don't know what to think. I thought that a cruise to the Bahamas would be the highlight of the trip, but that reality was turned upside down after the cruise ship capsized from an undetected rock underwater. I somehow grabbed onto a floating piece of driftwood as the ship capsized. I reached an island that the passengers were sightseeing and somehow stayed in one piece, both physically and mentally.

I soon assessed my surroundings. I was on the edge of a large group of trees. Okay, that's good. There were two other survivors on the island. At least I'd have some company but, there was an obvious problem. There was no water. Well, I was surrounded by the stuff, but it was all salt water, and I remembered vaguely in my mind that salt water actually dehydrated you if you drank it. I soon pushed the negative thoughts out of my head and went to meet the survivors.

Turns out, my situation wasn't as bad as expected. Anthony and Jonathan (the survivors) turned out to be well experienced in these situations, with Anthony being a wildlife expert, and Jonathan being an avid viewer of survival documentaries. The three of us then decided to find food. Personally, I felt that finding food was the easiest objective of all. There were coconut trees all around the coast, and even wild banana trees scattered here and there. I quickly filled my hands with coconuts and bananas and returned to the meeting point. Turns out, there was even passion fruit on the island, even though it wasn't native to the area. Anthony and Jonathan quickly followed suit with more coconut, banana and passion fruit.

We soon had a "feast" of fruit before we once again, searched the area for wood to build a shelter. That was a kind of a failure, because after we tied all the logs together and slept, our wooden tent collapsed on us after a particularly strong gust of wind hit it. We then realised that the logs were not secured properly (my bad) and it just unravelled like a tapestry when the gust hit. Being a minor problem, we fixed it and went back to sleeping. When we awoke, we realized that we had a bigger problem on our hands, if we were going to stay for a long time here, we needed a source of protein.

Jonathan solved this problem by building a fishing spear using some sticks, a sharp piece of flint, some shoestring, and some tree sap as glue. I did not expect it to work, but, Jonathan, having done this before, made a very good spear which provided us fish until the rescue. We then foraged for food, made a pile of it, and ran into our next problem: now that we had a way to fish, we needed a way to cook it. We solved this

problem by striking the flint spear against a rock to produce sparks and a fire. We then found a really flat and wide stones (I take credit for that) to act as a pan and grilled the fish. The fire turned out to burn through the wood really fast, so collecting firewood became an endless chore. We then called it a day, went to sleep and woke up the next day fresh and ready to start making signs to get rescued. We took a lot of firewood and formed an SOS sign. We then waited for a couple of hours after; finally, a biplane spotted us and called a rescue team to save us. Turns out, we were fine, with only some minor vitamin deficiencies, but mentally, the ordeal changed us.

When I reached my home, I realised just how much I had changed. I would just stare at the sheer amount of food in a supermarket, thinking about how we had to search the island just for a meal. On the other side, we became minor celebrities, and even starred in a wilderness survival documentary but the experience really made me appreciate how readily food is available to us, and how we should conserve it. It changed my life.

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the content of the story is straightforward and briefly developed
- the candidate has some success in creating a distinct, quite upbeat, personality for the narrator
- there is a clear attempt to organise the writing.

Weaknesses:

- although the candidate has some success in creating a character, generally, there is a limited use of the features of narrative writing
- the events within the story are generally undeveloped and are unrealistic and unconvincing, which could be attributed to the fact that the candidate writes about events beyond their personal experience
- details within the paragraphs are not always very well linked, which causes some confusion for the reader (e.g. there is no indication as to how the narrator knew of the existence of the 'two other survivors' in paragraph two and the reference to 'the logs' in paragraph four)
- the candidate writes in a more informative than narrative style.

This work successfully meets all the criteria for Level 3 and should be awarded a mark of 4 from the top of that level.

Areas for improvement:

- the task requires the candidate to include a lot of events in a relatively short piece of writing, more marks could have been achieved if they had focused on fewer aspects of the imagined adventure
- more marks could have been achieved if the candidate had developed the plot and the narrator in more depth and detail
- more originality, and therefore marks, could have been achieved if the candidate had written about an adventure that they had experienced personally (e.g. a camping trip with their family, a white-water rafting experience).

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- there is a little use of precise vocabulary for specific effect (e.g. 'scattered' banana trees in paragraph three, 'flint' and 'foraged' in paragraph four)
- there is an attempt to use a range of sentences for effect
- the choice of a first-person narrator is appropriate for the task
- meaning is usually clear.

Weaknesses:

- although the candidate attempts to use vocabulary with precision, the majority of the vocabulary used is generally adequate and straightforward
- although there is an attempt to use a range of sentences, they are not always secure in construction and tend to be repetitive in nature and style (e.g. the frequent use of 'Turns out' and 'We' as sentence starters)
- the overall register tends to be more informative than narrative in style, often because of the repetitive and straightforward nature of the writing
- there are errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The candidate demonstrates enough skills with accuracy for their work to be considered just about 'generally accurate' (Level 4). A balancing of the strengths and weaknesses of this piece suggests the writing also just meets the other Level 4 criteria and should be awarded a mark of 7 from the bottom of that level.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks could have been awarded if the candidate had successfully used a wider range of vocabulary and sentences for specific effect
- more marks could have been awarded if the candidate had demonstrated a greater understanding of how to construct sentences
- more marks could have been awarded if the candidate had used a more narrative, rather than informative, register and style.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 4 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 7 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 11 out of 25

Assignment 3 – Example 4

'<u>Mystery at Stable House</u>'

It was just another typical day on the girls' boarding. Music was playing, girls were laughing. But what nobody knew was that someone, amongst them all was plotting an idea to ruin people's belongings.

It was quarter to nine at night and the girls were playing "wink murder". The girl slipped out from behind them all and rushed to the kitchen to find that the kettle was boiling. The kettle was full, just as she planned. She poured fairy liquid down the spout of the kettle and left it to boil then grabbed a bottle of her friend's mayonnaise and emptied the contents out all over the shelf in the fridge. Looking around, a loaf of bread caught her eye and didn't escape her evil intentions … ripping it up, she smiled as she stuffed it in the wrapper and placed it neatly back on the shelf. Her kitchen job done, she walked out, the opposite way to where the rest of the girls were, and ran upstairs going into every single room, stealing thigs, using things and moving things. She saw some straighteners, she used them. She saw some money, she stole it.

She saw something valuable, she broke it.

When she had gone back downstairs, she made sure that the staff were occupied so she could steal the master key and copy it. She crept into the office and looked through all of the drawers until she found the key. Whilst she was there she used a lighter, a piece of metal and some scissors to copy the key. When the job had been done successfully, she walked out innocently with the fake key and back up to her room without being spotted.

Later that night when everyone had gone to their rooms, the girl (who was called Sophie) waited until dark to sneak out. She gathered up all the items she needed and she made sure she wore gloves because she knows she would be caught with her fingerprints, she would be caught red handed. She looked behind her at the clock she turned back around and headed for the door. She tiptoed down the dark corridor trying not to step on the creaky floorboards. She knew what she was going to do, she knew it very clear. Sophie kept her eyes on the door of her best friend's bedroom whilst throwing and catching a sharp slicing knife she found lying around the kitchen. She got to the door, and used her master key she copy earlier that night. She wriggled the key around until the door unlocked. She slowly opened the door and saw her friend lying there asleep. She held the knife securely with one hand, and with the other hand she had a towel which she held hard and firm over her mouth and nose, so no noise would be made. Sophie headed straight for her chest, within a couple of seconds, the knife had gone through to her heart and had killed her. She didn't make a noise. Turning away from her murdered friend, she walked out the door, locking it behind her. As she was walking down the

corridor, looking surprisingly innocent, she planted the knife in the bathroom toilet and the towel just dropped on the floor. Knowing what she did, she headed back to her bed.

It was a bright sunny morning and Sophie was just about to get up to take in the day when she heard a huge scream. It was deafening … it came from the bathroom …

(585 words)

Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

Strengths:

- the content of the narrative tends to be straightforward
- there is an attempt to characterise the main character of Sophie
- there is an attempt to briefly develop the story
- structure is mostly organised.

Weaknesses:

- although the content is straightforward, at times it borders on simple and ideas and events are limited (e.g. making a copy of the key in paragraph three)
- the attempt to characterise the main character is largely unsuccessful because the reader is unclear as to what motivates her to carry out the evil deeds
- the development of the story becomes unsuccessful as the tale progresses because the actions of the main character are unconvincing and unrealistic, and fail to maintain the interest of the reader
- although the structure is mostly organised, it is not always effective (e.g. the use of repetitive sentence structures within paragraphs and the weak final paragraph).

The candidate demonstrates enough understanding of the features of narrative writing to meet the criteria at the lower end of Level 3.

Areas for improvement:

- more marks could have been achieved if the candidate had developed the main character in more depth and detail
- more marks could have been achieved if the candidate had included more convincing and realistic events in the narrative.

Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

Strengths:

- the register is straightforward and quite simple at times, but the candidate does show a limited awareness of context (e.g. final few sentences of paragraph two to convey the character of Sophie to the reader)
- spelling is quite accurate
- meaning is usually clear.

Weaknesses:

- the range of vocabulary is mainly simple or functional in style and nature
- the candidate uses straightforward, mainly simple, sentences, which affects the overall fluency of the work
- there is some insecurity with sentence structure (e.g. second sentence in paragraph four)
- there are quite frequent errors with grammar and punctuation (e.g. tenses, full stops and commas).

This work meets the criteria for Level 3 and should be awarded a mark of 6 from the top of that level.

Areas for improvement:

- marks from Level 4 could have been achieved if the candidate had demonstrated greater security with their use of punctuation
- marks from Level 4 could have been achieved if the candidate had used a wider range of vocabulary and sentences for specific effect.

Mark awarded for content and structure = 3 out of 10

Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 6 out of 15

Total marks awarded = 9 out of 25

4. Administration and moderation

4.1 Checklist

- Each centre appoints an internal moderator to be responsible for administration where there is more than one teacher/moderator. More information on this process can be found on the samples database at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples.

- During the course, teachers annotate and assess assignments regularly and keep records.

- At the end of the course, teachers finalise the overall marks for each portfolio by adding together the individual assignment totals to reach an overall mark out of 80. These totals will automatically place the candidates in rank order.

The forms required for the conduct and assessment of the coursework component may be downloaded from www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples

- An *Individual Candidate Record Card* must be completed for each candidate and fixed to the front of the portfolio.

- The internal moderator holds a meeting at which the marking of all teachers is checked and any adjustments made.

- The final marks for **all** candidates in the cohort are entered on the *Coursework Assessment Summary Form*, where all adjustments made at internal moderation are shown.

- The final marks are also entered on the mark sheet *MS1*.

- The internal moderator checks that the marks on the *MS1*, the *Coursework Assessment Summary Form* and the *Individual Candidate Record Card* are the same.

- In accordance with instructions received from Cambridge International, a sample is prepared for the external moderator, and this is sent to Cambridge International. Details for the selection of that sample are provided on the Samples Database at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples.

4.2 Marking drafts

You are allowed to advise candidates to revise, edit and to correct their work, but **you must under no circumstance indicate and correct errors on their behalf**. The advice must not constitute the correction. It is important that centres take note of this requirement in order to avoid running the risk of inadvertently engaging in malpractice.

A comment at the end of the work such as:

'*You should check your punctuation, especially your use of full stops.*'

is allowable. An indication of where a full stop has been omitted is not.

It is good practice to discuss issues such as structure, balance, and beginnings and endings with candidates with a view to improving first drafts. Your aim is for candidates to learn to criticise their own work and to make changes for the better.

The external moderator will expect to see amendments to a first draft in the candidate's own writing in addition to a teacher's comment at the end of the work.

4.3 Marking final drafts of assignments

Teachers are reminded that the final drafts of all assignments should be annotated with comments related to the descriptors in the relevant Level Descriptions Tables (A, B, C and D). Teachers are also reminded that errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar, and inaccurate or inappropriate expression, should also be clearly indicated by the markers.

At the end of the course, it is a good idea to check and possibly reassess the accuracy of the assessment for reading and writing of each candidate, using the Level Descriptions. The final mark for writing will be an exact arithmetical addition of the three marks for the individual assignments. The mark for reading in Assignment 1 will be added to reach a total mark out of 80 for each candidate.

The marks for writing relate objectively to the Level Descriptions and no account is taken of the stage in the course when they were produced.

4.4 Timetable

Early in the course, one teacher needs to take responsibility for administering the setting and assessing of coursework (the Internal Moderator). Dates must be set for the completion of work within the centre and for an internal moderation meeting, if required, in line with the final dates for submission of marks to Cambridge. The teacher responsible should also check the paperwork and, in particular, that the marks on the portfolios, the *Candidate Assessment Summary Form*, the *MS1* and the *Individual Candidate Record Cards* all match each other.

4.5 The internal moderation meeting(s)

This meeting is essential if there are two or more teaching sets entering candidates from the centre and they have a different teacher/moderator.

Where a centre only has a single teacher/moderator in place, it may be possible for that colleague to liaise with another nearby centre to discuss marking standards so any assessment is not completed in isolation.

The function of the internal moderation meeting(s) is to establish a single, reliable rank order for all the candidates in the centre based on a standardised approach to the marking of each individual assignment. Previously it had to be held when all the folders were complete and just before the marks were submitted to Cambridge. It is still recommended that centres hold such a meeting but now that the rank order is automatically created by the addition of marks as opposed to an overall judgement, it may also be useful for colleagues to meet more regularly; for example, when all the candidates have completed Assignment 1. Centres, and the individual teachers within, can complete the assignments in any order they wish at any point within the course and this is entirely at the discretion of the centre but there may be opportunities to hold multiple meetings to discuss individual assignments under the new system of marking. Meeting more regularly to discuss and standardise each individual assignment in turn may prove to be a more effective model for assessment than just one meeting when all the portfolios have been completed.

While it is possible for all the teachers to meet for this purpose, it is expensive on staff time, and the process takes longer because different teachers have to see large numbers of portfolios and agree on the marks, which can take a great deal of discussion. The centre may therefore choose two teachers who are known to be reliable assessors, to meet to assess the marking of each teaching group in turn.

They must first of all agree on the marking of each other's candidates. They then examine a sample from each of the other sets in turn. There should be ten assignment/portfolios in each sample, covering the range from the highest to the lowest mark. The marks may be approved, or judged to be consistently severe or generous, in which case the marks should be amended appropriately. It may be decided that marks only need to be amended in a particular range of the marking, for example the bottom third.

If the moderating teachers are not sure how to adjust marks, they may call for more folders from a teaching group. Where the marking is inconsistent, they should try to work out why this has occurred and ask the teacher concerned to revisit the relevant level descriptions and reassess the particular assignment(s) accordingly. Where marking is inconsistent, it is usually because one of the criteria in the Table of Level

Descriptions has been considered more important than the rest. Another common issue is when an unduly large number of candidates have been given the same mark and it is impossible to agree that the work is of the same quality. This can usually be resolved by asking the teacher to redistribute the candidates over a slightly wider mark range.

When the process is at an end, the internal moderator should make sure that all the amendments to the marks are recorded on the *Coursework Assessment Summary Form* and that these are the final marks to be submitted to Cambridge and to be recorded on the individual portfolios and the mark sheets.

4.6 External moderation

It is a requirement that each centre must send a sample of their portfolios to Cambridge for external moderation. The candidates included in this sample will be selected by Cambridge. Details of this can be found on our samples database.

To access the samples database, your Exams Officer should go to www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples and enter your centre number and the syllabus number.

The moderation sample should include a copy of all texts used for Assignment 1 and the first draft of **one** assignment.

It is the responsibility of the centres to ensure that the portfolios of work are securely fixed together when they are submitted to Cambridge for external moderation. Each portfolio of work should be securely attached to the *Individual Candidate Record Card*, which should be completed with all the relevant details. The most secure method of fixing work together is with staples or treasury tags. Paperclips or plastic wallets **should not** be used as a method of securing work because the individual pieces of paper can become loose and potentially mislaid or lost during the moderation process.

Portfolios **should not be** enclosed in individual plastic packets or sent in heavy folders.

The sample should be accompanied by the moderator's copy of the mark sheet *MS1*, the centre's *Coursework Assessment Summary Form (*which should include the marks for the whole cohort), a copy of all texts used for Assignment 1 and the *Individual Candidate Record Card(s)* for the candidates in the sample sent.

Your external moderator will seek to approve your marks. Where they are amended, this will be to bring your marking into line with all centres entering the component.

Please check all details, deadlines and arrangements in the *Cambridge Handbook* found on our public website at www.cambridgeinternational.org/exam-administration/cambridge-exams-officers-guide/

4.7 Documentation

*Individual Candidate Record Card*s and the *Coursework Assessment Summary Forms* can be found at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples