

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure that their answers focus on the questions.
- In the sub-questions in **Question 1** where candidates are asked to answer in their own words, candidates should avoid lifting long phrases or whole sentences from the passage.
- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)**, candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the single-word definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop the ideas in the passage, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to develop the details offered in the text for the third bullet point, using the passage to develop a plausible response.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct style and register for **Question 2**.
- Candidates should avoid copying from the passage in **Question 2**.
- In **Question 3(a)** candidates should only make one point on each line and avoid repeating similar points.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. Most of the vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level. Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and examiners reported seeing a reasonable number of high quality responses to **Question 2**. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of **Questions 3(a)** and **3(b)**. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and few examples of No Response answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) State **two** features of the walk which made it difficult for the narrator to reach the mountain lake (paragraph 1, 'There is a lake ...'). [1 mark]

This was a fairly straightforward question with many candidates gaining both marks. The question does not ask for own words so candidates who copied the appropriate answer from the text were not penalised. The choice of answers was broadly divided into the geographical features of the lake and its terrain, as well as the difficulties experienced by the climbers. Candidates who wrote more than one valid answer in one section of the answer grid were not penalised and the answers, if correct, were credited. Most candidates identified the boggy nature of the ground as a difficult feature and many stated that the climbers were either tired or exhausted. A smaller number identified the position of the lake halfway up a mountain as being a difficulty. Candidates should

beware of introducing their own knowledge in questions such as this. Lack of oxygen high up may result in tiredness for climbers but this is not given as a difficulty in the passage.

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the narrator can see as he faces the open country (paragraph 1, 'There is a lake ...')** [2 marks]

In order to gain marks on this question candidates were required to reshape material from the passage or to answer using their own words. Some candidates believed that 'open country' was a viable response but, of course, this is within the question and without further relevant qualification did not gain a mark. Most candidates were able to score at least one mark on this question, usually by either referring to the greenery of the landscape, the River Shannon, or the many lakes. A few candidates referred to the tiny streams mentioned in the passage however, these could be heard but not seen and therefore this was not a viable response to the question.

- (c) **(Which four-word phrase in paragraph 1 suggests that the water in the tiny streams cannot be seen by the narrator (paragraph 1, 'There is a lake ...')?** [2 marks]

Many candidates failed to identify the required phrase from paragraph 1, '*well beyond our vision*'. Some selected phrases from other parts of the text and some ignored the 'four-word' stipulation and wrote down whole sentences both with and without the correct phrase. However, a large number of candidates did identify the correct phrase to gain the mark.

- (d) **Re-read paragraph 2. Using your own words, give two reasons why the narrator says the mountain lake is difficult to find (paragraph 2, 'The mountain lake is not easy to find ...').** [2 marks]

Candidates were expected to frame their answers using their own words and those answers which were close to the original text but had been subject to some recasting attempt were accepted. The most popular answer here was the small size of the lake, closely followed by the blanket of fog/thick clouds which sometimes smothered it. Many candidates also identified how the lake remained hidden until the last moment when they reached the ridge, and examiners were encouraged to reward variations of this last-minute encounter. A few candidates answered that the 'climb' to find it made it hard to find, but they were only awarded the mark if they explained that it was an upwards climb.

- (e) **Re-read the sentence 'Scientists suggest that fewer physical differences are to be expected in a small population long isolated from others.' (lines 19–20).**

The brown trout are similar in appearance. Using your own words, explain what reasons scientists give for this similarity (paragraph 3, 'This isolated lake is fed ...'). [2 marks]

The majority of candidates found this question very challenging. Many answers simply paraphrased the quotation in the question by repeating the phrases 'similar in appearance', 'small population' and 'long isolated'. These responses could not be credited at all, as they simply repeated the wording given in the question without demonstrating understanding. Very few candidates attempted to explain the reasons for the similarity in their own words.

- (f) **Re-read paragraph 5 ('To celebrate Leo's first trout ...').**

Using your own words, explain what the narrator says about his experience of painting the trout. [2 marks]

Candidates found this question very accessible and the majority grasped the idea that the father's painting, although technically proficient, was not good enough to convey the true beauty of the trout caught by Leo. Many candidates gained full marks on this question. Some, however, were confused and offered irrelevant comments about hanging the painting on the wall and writing about the trout's beauty.

(g)(i) Re-read the passage. Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in the following quotations:

- 1 *'the brown trout, to cruise the dark waters undisturbed' (lines 13–14)*
- 2 *'the brown trout always rise freely, as though to reward us for the effort' (lines 25–26)*
- 3 *'admiring the varnished scales of Leo's first trout' (line 29)* [3 marks]

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the **words in italics**. Many candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more suited to a **(g)(ii)** type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the italicised words as they are used in the passage and only a relatively small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

- 1 Very few candidates managed to explain the meaning of the word 'cruise' in the context of the passage and because of the association of the word with ships offered explanations such as 'sailed' or simply 'swam'.
- 2 Explanations of the word 'freely' sometimes picked up on the lack of restriction/force and random connotations of the word.
- 3 A number of candidates accurately explained 'varnished' as polished, glossy, or shining but others linked it to decorating and a clear covering. Quite a number of candidates misread the word as 'vanished' and explained it in terms of disappearing.

(g)(ii) Explain how the language in each of the quotations in Question (g)(i) helps to suggest the appearance and behaviour of the brown trout. You should refer to the whole quotation in your answer, not just the word underlined. [6 marks]

In response to this question some candidates merely repeated their answers to **(g)(i)** and therefore gained no further marks. Very few attempted to explain the whole phrase given or comment on the effects of the writing. Some candidates who had given explanations in **(g)(i)** for the whole quotation rather than the underlined word, then failed to give the same explanation to **(g)(ii)** where it would have gained at least one mark.

- 1 *the brown trout, to cruise the dark waters undisturbed' (lines 13–14)*
This was very rarely understood in terms of language and effect and many candidates thought the trout was literally a ship sailing through the water.
- 2 *'the brown trout always rise freely, as though to reward us for the effort' (lines 25–26)*
Some candidates successfully explained the trouts' apparent lack of collective fear and almost 'happy' or relaxed approach to the anglers. Many explained the idea that the trout was pleased to see them.
- 3 *'admiring the varnished scales of Leo's first trout' (line 29)*
A number of candidates commented on the 'beauty' of the trout presumably from the word 'admiring' even when they were unsure of the meaning of 'varnished' and were able to gain a mark.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Leo, the narrator's son in Passage A. You have decided to write a journal entry, describing the fishing trip to the mountain lake with your father.

Write your journal entry.

In your journal entry you should:

- describe the sights and sounds of the mountain and lake
- describe how you felt on catching your first trout
- explain how these experiences have influenced your attitude to the natural world.

Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your journal entry: 'I didn't know what to expect when I first saw the mountain lake ...'

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

[Total: 15 marks]

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullet points given in the question and to give a credible account of Leo's experiences of climbing up to the mountain lake with his father and catching his first trout. The most successful responses developed a credible voice for Leo and explored his feelings about the trip and how it influenced his attitude to the natural world. The vast majority of candidates were comfortable writing a journal, offering an appropriate register and tone. Some candidates mistakenly wrote the journal as Leo's father, and a number merely narrated the events of the passage without focusing on the three prompts given in the question rubric. A small minority of candidates merely copied extracts from the passage with very few own words or produced journal entries which were very close to the original passage.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points offering a balanced response to the whole task. However, although some candidates produced promising journal entries, they only focused on the first two prompts in the question. These responses gave convincing descriptions of the sights and sounds of the mountain and the lake and described how excited and proud Leo felt on catching his first trout but would have gained higher marks by developing the third prompt about Leo's resulting attitude, whether altered or not, to the natural world. Furthermore, some candidates chose to completely ignore the third bullet point completely while others only made a cursory reference to it at the end of the entry. Quite a number of candidates did remember to address the third bullet point about the natural world and wrote about the character building nature of the climb and the fishing trip. There were some interesting and heartfelt lectures about not being cruel to living creatures, and not giving up in life. Occasionally in addressing the third bullet point candidates lost track of the passage and provided a lengthy ecology lecture.

Some candidates' rather narrative approach to the task led them to cover the prompts partially by, for example, describing the climb up the mountain as opposed to the sights and sounds asked for. Others merely described Leo catching the trout as opposed to how he felt about it. The less successful responses tended to be those where candidates simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although, generally, there wasn't extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates putting themselves in the position of the character and giving life to his experiences. The weakest responses simply lifted large sections of the passage, often writing as Leo's father as a result.

To gain the higher marks of Bands 1 and 2 for Reading it is essential that candidates develop ideas based on the passage rather than add their own imagined content. A few responses assumed that the whole family were on the trip and described picnics and games with siblings. A number also wrote in some detail about the chirping sounds of birds around them, but no birds are mentioned in the passage. Some journal entries recorded waiting hours to catch the trout, but it clearly states in the passage that he caught it within ten minutes. The passage also tells us that Leo caught one fish which he gently gave back to the lake, but some journals described him catching numerous fish and taking them home. Of course, any developed journal entry should rely to some extent on imagination and feasible extension, but all development should be firmly tethered to details given in the passage. A few journal entries were further removed than this with some bearing little relation to the passage and becoming works of fiction, which of course, is not within the remit of the Reading Objectives for this paper.

The best responses – and there were a number – managed to develop imaginatively all three bullet points using and developing the finer details in the passage. One or two candidates cleverly even managed to address prompt three by spreading it across the journal entry so we could witness Leo’s gradual change of attitude from being bored and tired when climbing, to gradual delight at the sight of the surrounding landscape and even more beautiful fish. These responses firmly tethered any development to the sights, sounds and experiences that Leo was exposed to that day.

Question 3

(a) Notes

What are John Treagood’s essential daily needs and the difficulties he faces in maintaining his lifestyle, according to Passage B?

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

[10 marks]

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was generally answered well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a small number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. Sometimes candidates included more than ten relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than ten marks overall. There were also some points repeated several times, most notably focused on his need for food and water. Candidates should also ensure that the points they offer are relevant. Many cited his former job as a teaching, or the number of years he had spent travelling, neither of which were focused on his daily needs or difficulties maintaining his lifestyle. Occasionally candidates added numbered points at the end of the response; these extra points were not marked, as they are expected to select ten only. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly enough to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the ten lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating similar points. Only a small number of candidates gained over eight marks, although the majority of candidates achieved five or above.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you John Treagood’s essential daily needs and the difficulties he faces in maintaining his lifestyle.

You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

[5 marks]

A small number of candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries, however, the majority of candidates’ responses were Band 2 (points were ‘mostly focused’ and made ‘clearly’) or Band 3 (‘some areas of conciseness’). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, tended to include lengthy commentary about John’s age or the unsuitability of his chosen lifestyle, unnecessary details, repetition or unselective ‘lifting’. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be rather wordy with lack of focus on the question. The weakest responses copied unselectively.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- addressed tasks in the order set, minimising the likelihood of rubric errors
- considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each question
- paid attention to the key words, guidance and instructions for each task
- did not rely on simply skim reading texts and/or tasks
- returned to the text when necessary to clarify an idea or reconsider an important detail
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- selected the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- used their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- avoided copying and/or lifting whole sentences or sections from either passage
- checked and edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated a familiarity with the format of the paper and the general demands of the three tasks. There were very few instances where all or part of a task had not been attempted, though on occasion opportunities to target higher marks were missed where candidates offered a restricted range of ideas and/or dealt unevenly with each part of the task in hand. Better responses indicated an awareness of the need to use, rather than repeat, the material from the passages in order to answer the questions. The most successful answers were able to modify the material in the passages skilfully and use it to show understanding, remaining focused on the specific demands of each task. Less successful responses were often over reliant on the wording and/or sequence of the text(s) and paid limited attention to the details of the question, providing less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result. Centres are reminded that simple paraphrasing and/or copying of the text should be avoided.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, and were for the most part able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Very occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by not providing 15 answers in **Question 3(a)** or offering fewer than 8 explained choices in **Question 2**.

More successful answers were able to demonstrate purposeful reading, interpreting and using details effectively in **Question 1** and ensuring that their selections from the text in **Question 2** and **Question 3(a)** were precise, accurate and addressed the specific focus of the question.

Most **Question 1** responses attempted all three bullets of the task and were aware of the need to reinterpret Bo and Alex's experiences from the perspective of a journalist writing some time later than the events as described. Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passage, with the best taking on the role of a journalist convincingly and demonstrating a particularly strong sense of purpose and approach to provide thorough and engaging articles. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities through more mechanical treatment of the text. Less successful responses sometimes did not include sufficient reference to ideas from the passage or repeated the narrative with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates need to consider appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two specified paragraphs and offer precise, focused comments in relation to these choices. To target higher bands, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they identify, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to suggest potentially relevant examples for analysis, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear or careful in the examination of their choices. A number repeated the language of the choices in their explanations, and/or repeated similar, often general, comments for each selection – diluting evidence of understanding as a result.

In **Question 3(a)** most candidates were able to find a good number of points. Though all points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, opportunities were often missed to target full marks, often as a result of repetition of aspects of the same idea from the early part of the text at the expense of other distinct content from elsewhere in the passage. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)** and most understood that they should use short notes rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. Copying chunks of the passage, listing several possible points on one line and/or completing an idea over more than one line of the answer grid cannot be taken as evidence of secure understanding or rewarded. Each point offered needs to be precisely identified and clearly communicated on one numbered line.

Where responses were most successful in **Question 3(b)**, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well focused responses were over reliant on copying from the text with minimal/no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response and do not need to replace every word of the original. They should not, however, lift whole phrases and/or sentences from the text, or rely on simply listing ideas in the order of the passage. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20 per cent of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and reviewing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable. The best responses were careful to ensure that any ambitious vocabulary choices helped to sharpen, rather than blur, focus on the idea in hand and that the punctuation and spelling used were sufficiently accurate to make intended meaning clear to their reader.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – Imagine that you are a journalist preparing a magazine article about through-hiking. You interview Bo and Alex about their experiences.

Write the magazine article.

In your magazine article you should explain:

- **what ‘through-hiking’ involves and how someone should prepare for it**
- **Bo and Alex’s memories of their first day**
- **the challenges and benefits of ‘through-hiking’.**

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

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the passage and task in general terms. Some chose to present their article partly or wholly in interview form, which if reported from the perspective of the journalist did still allow for some effective development of ideas. However, simple dialogues which lacked focus on the task often missed opportunities to reflect on the experiences of the two hikers as described and to develop ideas with the benefit of hindsight or the journalist's overview of the situation. Many of the more successful answers showed some confidence in adopting an appropriate style and suitable language for a feature article, taking account of the need to both interest and inform their readers. For example, they were able to explain clearly for the benefit of readers the necessary preparations for such a

challenging hike should readers be inspired to take up the sport themselves. Some responses offered reported, often amusing, snippets and anecdotes from Alex and/or Bo's perspective throughout. Others dealt with the memories of Bo and Alex's first day as a separate section to exemplify some of the more general advice and explanation offered. Where content had been planned in advance, and filtered through the perspective of the journalist, both of these approaches proved successful. Where responses relied too heavily on repeating or replaying the passage and/or showed little evidence of having planned a route through the answer in advance, answers were less well focused on the task. The least successful responses simply copied sections of the text.

The most convincing responses to **Question 1** showed evidence of candidates having returned to the passage to interpret the experiences of each of the two hikers separately and consider the implications of details included. Ahead of writing their response, these candidates had arrived at a considered view of Alex's predicament and level of expertise, as well as an understanding of the likely challenges of through-hiking as presented in the passage.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to make use of a number of explicit ideas and factual information. Better answers incorporated details of what through-hiking involved and the planning it necessitated beforehand as the article progressed, drip-feeding the information for the benefit of their readers rather than simply repeating Bo's list of packed items and/or replaying the definition of through-hiking given in the introduction to the text. It was rare for an answer not to include reference to the fact that a range of equipment was necessary and/or that the hike was long and would take around six months. Fewer answers noted the need for support along the trail to be arranged beforehand and/or rest days in hotels scheduled in advance. Some suggested that hikers should carry all the water and food they needed for the hike with them, missing key details in the text, whilst others only commented on the need to 'prepare well' in advance without explaining how or why. Occasionally, errors with spelling or grammar affected the sense of the idea in hand and provided less secure evidence of close reading – for example, by suggesting a need for 'metal strength' or washing feet (rather than socks) each evening.

Some candidates lost sight of the task when dealing with bullet two, lapsing into retelling the narrative from Bo's perspective in similar terms to the passage. Some scripts included descriptions of the forest mostly copied from the text. Some failed to appreciate that the two hikers' separate experiences needed teasing out from the text, and, instead, generalised about them both being nervous, lonely or hungry, missing opportunities to evidence careful reading. Most however chose to offer at least something of Alex's point of view and some chose to use quotations from each hiker to interpret and develop ideas helpfully – for example, by suggesting their reactions as they reminisced about their meeting that first night.

Many answers were able to refer to Bo having spotted Alex earlier on the trail, though fewer considered the potential significance of the sighting and some thought that the hikers had started out together. Some did pick up on possible implications as to how Alex may have become lost and hungry, and in need of help, having first appeared to be an 'expert' in Bo's eyes. Stronger answers suggested such valid interpretations as that Alex's smooth and easy progress initially was the result of not having packed sufficient (heavier) supplies rather than being indicative of expertise. Some made use of subtle details in the text to suggest that Alex had perhaps taken an ill-advised 'short cut' away from the marked trail (and slipped as a result). In less successful answers, Alex's meeting with Bo often relied on details copied from the final paragraph, whilst mid-range answers tended to list details mechanically and miss opportunities for relevant development – for example, some made reference to the mountains without commenting on the beauty of the natural scenery. Candidates producing competent responses or better had often recognised the humour in newcomer Bo's exaggerated reactions and fears as described and referenced it in their article.

In the weakest answers, lifting in relation to the first two bullets was often an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon. For example, the second sentence of paragraph one including the long list of items Bo had packed was often reproduced. Incomplete or inaccurate copying was sometimes a symptom and/or cause of misreading and misunderstanding in **Question 1** – for example, reference to a 'loud gunshot' and/or actual 'forest monsters' diluted evidence of close reading in a number of answers. At times these were at odds with **Question 2** answers from the same candidates who, having noticed and corrected their error when examining the text in **Question 2**, failed to return to their **Question 1** answer to correct the same mistake.

Opportunities were missed in some answers to widen the range of ideas offered in relation to each bullet – for example, by offering ideas for just one aspect of the bullet only and/or paying insufficient attention to key words. There were answers which only dealt with the ‘challenges’ of through-hiking, neglecting the possible ‘benefits’. Others repeated the events of Bo and/or Alex’s first day rather than offer their memories of it (missing the chance to integrate significant details interpreted in the light of experience). In good responses, a number of relevant points in relation to the final bullet had been included throughout the article and were not left until/repeated in the final end paragraph. For example, strong answers were able to exploit the opportunities to refer to endurance, remoteness, hazards and nature when addressing points in bullets one and two.

Though responses often worked hard to create a recognisable style for their article, insecure use of vocabulary at times undermined the overall effect. Awkward slips such as reference to a ‘pair of clothes’ were common and it was not unusual for answers to rely on copied phrases from the text such as ‘rudimentary cooking equipment’ which might easily have been included in own words. Better answers paid attention to the purpose and audience for the task and often chose not to follow the order of the bullets when organising their ideas, for example, by explaining the challenges of through hiking and what it entailed, before exemplifying some of those potential pitfalls by reference to Bo and/or Alex’s experience. Weaker answers often followed the order of the text and detailed the events of Bo and Alex’s first days without first introducing either hiker to their readers.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- use your own words to express ideas from the text which are relevant to your answer rather than recycling the language of the passage
- read the passage carefully, more than once, identifying the key ideas and details you can adapt for use in your answer
- consider the audience and purpose for your response before you begin writing and take account of these throughout
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each aspect of each of the three bullet points
- plan a route through your answer beforehand – you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- do not simply repeat details from the text – extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- do not waste time by counting the exact number of words in your answer – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) The forest in paragraph 4, beginning ‘Soon he was surrounded by ancient forest ...’
- (b) Bo’s reaction to the sudden noise in paragraph 8, beginning ‘Was it minutes or hours later?’

Select four words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery.

Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Responses in **Question 2** needed to identify precisely a range of relevant examples of language for discussion and provide sufficiently focused and clear analysis of these in order to evidence understanding of how the writer was using language in each case. Where the precise meaning of words was considered in context, candidates were often able to suggest something of the effect and better answers remembered to consider all key words within choices, arriving at a more complete understanding of the overall impact. Where meaning was misunderstood or less carefully considered, answers were often general at best. A number of weaker answers relied on repeating the language of the original in their explanations, providing less convincing evidence of understanding. The best answers were able to suggest the subtleties of meaning suggested by the choices they had selected – for example, going further than suggesting old as a meaning for ‘ancient’, or looked for ‘peered’.

A good number of candidates were able to provide evidence of skills and understanding in higher bands. Others struggled to offer evidence of understanding at Band 5. For the most part, candidates were able to show that they recognised at least some potentially interesting examples of language use and could offer some sense of the meanings of their selections. For marks in the top bands, candidates need to be careful to select and interpret choices accurately, considering examples in context and demonstrating that they understand some of the subtleties of how the language is working. Better answers focused on quality of analysis and avoided repetition of very similar comments in relation to more than one choice, with the best recognising and explaining imagery with some imagination.

There were plenty of potentially useful choices relating to both the description of the forest in paragraph four and Bo's reaction to the sudden noise in paragraph eight. Where candidates had not paid close attention to the detail of the task, less relevant choices were sometimes considered. In a few cases, candidates selected from the wrong paragraph and/or offered only two choices from each paragraph rather than the four from each suggested and consequently offered more limited evidence of Reading skills as a result.

Selections in **Question 2** need to be clear and deliberately selected – helping to focus the analysis which follows. Longer quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and often result in very general comments at best. On occasion, candidates selected longer phrases and went on to unpick the separate elements of these with some success. Others narrowed the focus down to single words and then reassembled the image. Both were potentially useful approaches where careful explanation was offered and repetition of the language of the original was avoided. Repetition of the words of the choice within the explanation offered was a feature of a number of lower range answers – often an indication that the meaning of the vocabulary selected had not been fully understood. Suggested meanings for selections such as 'ravenous', 'muffled' and 'strained' were inaccurate in a number of answers, indicating that choices needed to be selected more carefully. Taking time to select from the full range of potential choices those about which they felt most able to comment, rather than simply taking the first four or identifying choices by feature spotting, would have helped a number of candidates who offered only thin or inappropriate comment. Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and/or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question.

Opportunities were missed in some answers, such as where a chosen phrase contained more than one word of interest and the answer moved on too quickly – offering a more general explanation of the phrase as a whole and/or only considering one of the words it contained. For example, a number of answers discussed the use of 'intruder' but missed the chance to consider the effect of either 'magical' or 'garden'. Similarly, some candidates who saw humour in Bo's exaggerated reactions and fears in **Question 1** and had referenced it in their article did not consider their choices for paragraph 8 in **Question 2** in the light of this understanding of context. Care is also needed when copying choices from the text – for example, reference to 'peeked' rather than 'peered' resulted in less appropriate comment in some answers and similarly comments in relation to the 'terrifying forest' were not helpful in demonstrating understanding of the actual reference in context ('terrifying forest guardians').

Planning of relevant ideas ahead of writing would have helped some candidates to avoid empty phrases such as 'the writer's use of language helps to interest the reader', 'this is a creative choice of diction...' or 'the writer has incorporated a concoction of words and phrases'. Far from offering a useful starting point from which to move on to focus on particular language choices, such comment can offer a false sense of security and also take up valuable examination time. Similarly, repetition of the same general comment such as 'this shows how scared Bo was' meant opportunities for more relevant and precise comments were likely to be missed. Responses to **Question 2** need to explore and explain how or why the chosen language examples are working. Stronger responses were beginning to do this – with the best offering considered and careful analysis focused on language use in both parts of the question.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices, select your strongest four from each paragraph to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out lines of text
- avoid empty comments such as comments praising the writer for good use of language
- show your understanding in full – consider each of the key words within your identified choice
- consider the precise meaning in context of the words you have identified
- consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you when attempting to analyse effect.

Question 3

(a) **Notes**

According to **Passage B**, what are the challenges of living 'off grid'?

Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(b) **Summary**

Now use your notes to write a summary of what **Passage B** tells you about the challenges of living 'off grid'. You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

To address the task successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question, listing them clearly – one per numbered line. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line. Candidates are not required to use their own words in **part (a)** of the question, though better answers had often chosen to do so for clarity, for example, where points were implied and/or exemplified more than once in the original text. Reflecting on potential answers during planning stages would have helped a number of mid-range candidates to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point, to identify implied points and/or to avoid repetition of ideas.

In **Question 3(b)**, many candidates demonstrated an awareness of an appropriate style for a summary, though a number relied on the language or order of the original passage. The most successful responses reordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the text, connecting ideas with some skill. The least successful copied wholesale from the text with minimal or no modification, or offered a response which communicated only a few relevant ideas. Candidates producing answers at the top end often showed signs of having revisited answers in **3(a)** when planning **3(b)** in order to edit and refine points in this first part of the question and plan their route through their prose response. This resulted in clearer, more distinct points in **3(a)** and an efficient and often well-focused response in **3(b)**.

The majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purpose' they needed to identify fifteen distinct points in **3(a)** and that further answers added on after the fifteen would not be credited unless replacing a crossed-out answer earlier on. A few candidates however carried on beyond fifteen or did not complete the grid, offering fewer than fifteen responses. A number repeated the same idea more than once, missing opportunities to target higher marks, or offered incomplete or inaccurate points. There were a small number of candidates who repeated long sections of text copied from the passage without clear focus.

Question 3(b) requires consistent use of own words, and the best responses understood the need to be accurate, clear and concise when summarising relevant material from the passage. They were able to identify useful connections between points and reorganise ideas for the benefit of the reader.

Whilst lifting phrases from the text is to be avoided, there is no requirement to change every word from the original – and at times attempts to do so served to blur rather than clarify ideas. For example, altering the word 'ice' to 'solid, hard water in drinks' did not help the reader to follow the sense of the point being made and adversely affected concision. Stronger answers were careful to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible (without changing the original idea). Less secure use of expression was evident on occasion and prejudiced achievement in some answers – for example, suggestion of the need to 'wash clothes by yourself' or 'wash your own clothes' was not the same as the idea that clothes needed to be washed by hand as there was no washing machine .

A number of responses had attempted to paraphrase the passage rather than focus on the requirements of the question and were all too easily tempted to lift from the original as a result. **Question 3** is a selective summary, not a précis, and the best answers showed that candidates had remembered to focus carefully on the details of both question and text to make sure the answers they offered were relevant. Candidates do need to bear the question in mind and ask themselves if the point they are making is a direct answer to it – for example, the question did not ask for the benefits of living a life off-grid. Those writing about the challenges rather than recounting the experience of the narrator found it easier to avoid redundant material and move away from the language and organisation of the text, evidencing their own writing skills more successfully.

Opportunities to score full marks were often missed by otherwise successful answers where careless slips affected meaning – for example, some referred to problems with ‘lightning’ or ‘lightening’ instead of lighting, talked about a need to ‘adapt’ rather than ‘adapt to’, noted a requirement for ‘patients’ instead of ‘patience’ and/or talked about washing ‘cloths’ rather than ‘clothes’. Others omitted key words, changing the sense of the idea as they did so – for example, suggesting ‘chainsaws are expensive’, there was ‘no means of preserving food’ and/or ‘there aren’t other people around’.

Some of the weakest answers offered additional comment, examples or very general assumptions which were not suggested in the text (such as there being ‘no medical facilities’). Others indicated that they had lost focus on the passage and task by speculating as to the effects of ‘off-grid’ living, for example, discussing the children’s likely psychological and social development or their employment chances, and/or the effects on the environment of having a wood-burning stove.

In **Question 3(b)** there was frequent use of lifted phrases. Particularly common were: ‘seasonal daylight patterns’, ‘expensive to maintain’, ‘isn’t always easy to come by’, ‘live a little more at the pace of nature’ and ‘common tasks could take longer and be more difficult’. A number of candidates leant too heavily on the text throughout their responses, changing only the occasional word or transposing word order and missing opportunities to evidence skills at higher levels. Over-reliance on the structure and/or wording of the original passage often resulted in repetition of ideas in **3(b)** even when this had been avoided in **3(a)**, limiting both the range and focus of answers as a result.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete, distinct points
- read your answers in **3(a)** back to ensure you have answered the precise question as set
- list your points in **3(a)** – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/32
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use and appropriate form and style in both questions, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively, developing ideas to create a balanced response
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create specific effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

General comments

Examiners found that in the great majority of scripts, there was a clear understanding of the kind of style and register expected for both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Nearly all responses, regardless of achievement, were developed and sustained pieces of writing and there were very few brief or unfinished scripts. The rubric of the examination was understood by almost all candidates and very few attempted more questions than was required.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the issues addressed in the passage and some were able to establish and control an appropriate style and tone for a newspaper article. The majority of candidates used their own language rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage although weaker responses showed some use of phrases and words from it. Some phrases were more regularly lifted but only rarely formed a substantial part of the answer. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. In some middle range responses, there was a tendency to reiterate the ideas in the passage in the same sequence. These could have been improved by selecting and commenting on ideas from the passage. Many made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response although examiners noted that personal opinions, expressed at the end of the article, sometimes lost the style appropriate for an article. In weaker scripts, the material in the passage was sometimes discussed in general terms, usually with some commentary on whether animals should be kept in zoos or there was drifting from the main focus of the passage which was concerned with the impact of the development on the local area. The structure of weaker responses was frequently lacking in cohesion because points both in favour and opposed to the development were not reorganised from the passage and appeared side by side. These weaker responses often missed opportunities to criticise, discuss and evaluate the ideas in the passage.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for an article in a local newspaper. There assumed some common knowledge of the locality with the audience and sometimes adopted a clearly informative or, alternatively, opinionated approach. In the middle range of marks, scripts often showed some insecurity in grammar, particularly in the use of definite articles and grammatical agreement. In some weaker responses the interview in the transcript was simply reproduced in the candidate's own words or was reported as a simple record of what was said with limited understanding of how to use the information in it for a different purpose.

In the compositions, there were more answers to the narrative questions than the descriptive, although the second descriptive question was a more popular choice than the first. The second narrative question, with the given opening sentence, proved to be a very common option for candidates at all levels of achievement. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses across the mark range made use of descriptive detail without becoming too narrowly focused on narrative events. Some of the responses to the first descriptive question, which asked for a description of a carefully created work of art, were highly evocative and effective. The idea of 'a work of art' was interpreted imaginatively, from a painting to a classic car or, in a few cases, an individual or landscape. The second question elicited some strong, atmospheric descriptions of shelters of varying kinds, such as the London Underground during the blitz or a building or place from which to escape scenes of war and conflict. In both descriptive questions, weaker responses tended to be more straightforward accounts which listed more than described the details observed. Most responses avoided entirely narrative accounts. In a few cases, narrative was predominant and there were few descriptive details to credit. These could have been improved by focusing on the sights and sounds noticed by the writer and the effects these had on thoughts and feelings. In responses to this question, examiners noted that there was, at all levels, some insecure understanding of what is meant by 'sheltering' and there was a greater incidence than usual of responses which had limited connection with the title or which seemed to be answers to previous questions.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Weaker narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, plotlines which lacked credibility or less attention paid to character and setting. In **Question 4**, the idea of an argument was used in many varied ways although the sense in which is 'should have been avoided' was less well handled by weaker candidates and often simply quoted at the end of the story. **Question 5** was a very popular choice and the scenario described in the question elicited some interesting narratives written as crime stories.

Some composition responses would have benefitted from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's sympathy were features understood by effective writers in this series. Many descriptions would have been improved by the inclusion of well chosen, closely observed details which created an overall picture and engaged the reader's interest and emotions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Imagine you live in Speizet.

Write an article for your local newspaper about the proposed Zoopark.

In your article, you should evaluate:

- **the advantages and disadvantages of the Zoopark for the village**
- **the claims Guy Pensivy makes that Zooparks are saving animals and the planet.**

Base your letter on what you have read in the transcript of the radio show, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the two bullet points.

Begin your article: 'The proposed Zoopark has certainly caused debate locally ...'

Twenty-five marks were available for this question, of which fifteen were for the quality of writing and ten for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where there was some challenge to Guy Pensivy's views or to the interviewer's points. In more accomplished responses, the contradictions in Guy Pensivy's arguments were exposed and there was some discussion and weighing up of the benefits and pitfalls of the proposal to build a Zoopark. Where the article showed a high degree of accuracy and fluency, often with a consistent sense of audience and a polished style, examiners awarded very high marks. Better responses tended to probe Pensivy's assumptions and examine more closely the supposed benefits for the village, often agreeing with some

aspects of the views expressed in the passage but disagreeing with others. Many concluded by offering a balanced overall response to the proposal. Some saw in Guy Pensivy's attitudes a smugness or a patronising tone towards a 'backward little village', as one candidate put it. Others in favour of the development wrote about the lack of opportunity and entertainment for young people in the village and criticised the interviewer's assumption that all residents enjoyed and appreciated the peace and quiet of 'sleepy little Speizet.' Examiners awarded the highest marks for responses where the nuanced, implicit attitudes of Guy Pensivy towards the village and its people were teased out and the inherent tensions between profit and conservation, or between exploitation and the provision of a resource, were highlighted and explored.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward selections of the points in the passage, mostly focusing on the ways in which Speizet might be affected by the development in both beneficial and less desirable ways. In most cases, there was a reasonable grasp of both sides of the argument represented in the transcript and some comment made on them. For example, many at this level welcomed the proposal and agreed that it could benefit the community but also discussed the impact of visitors, pollution and noise as a necessary consequence of it. These responses, while accurately identifying ideas such as benefits of Zooparks for animals and local people, typically showed a less subtle grasp of the inferential points in the passage.

Weaker responses typically showed some understanding of the main ideas in the passage. Some wrote in more general terms and covered fewer points in the passage. At this level, the range of points addressed was narrower or more one-sided. Some were more general in focus, addressing the notion of keeping animals in captivity without reading the passage through the eyes of a local person whose life would be changed by the development. There was also some misreading of the details of the proposed development. These needed a closer reading of both the task and the passage to ensure that the response was properly focused.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and showed some careful reading between the lines of the passage to show a more sophisticated understanding of the ideas in it. At this level, Guy Pensivy's attitudes and assumptions, and some examination of the points made on both sides in the passage, were addressed together in a consistently evaluative answer. The assumptions that Speizet was in need of development or that a Zoopark would actually benefit local people as well as make profits for the company were often challenged. Pensivy's point of view as a marketing representative was sometimes considered as necessarily one which promoted more beneficial aspects but neglected less desirable ones and, as one candidate, wrote, 'It's your job to sell this idea to us, your livelihood depends on it.' Ideas such as whether the protection offered animals by a code which was not binding on the company was really guaranteed or whether the dismissal of one employee would actually prevent future escapes of animals were examined with some scepticism. This approach showed a clear evaluation rather than straightforward rebuttal of the ideas. Some argued in favour of the proposal by focusing on its attractiveness for young people for whom the sleepy village had little appeal. These addressed the problems of litter and pollution by pointing out that these were temporary or not insurmountable while the inevitable decline of the village, as seen by dwindling businesses, would be impossible to prevent without action. For many candidates, the welfare of the animals was at the heart of their concerns about the plan. As one candidate wrote, 'The fact that their enclosures will be spacious – which we only have a marketing man's word for – doesn't detract from the grim reality of these majestic animals being enclosed in the first place and used for our entertainment and Mr Pensivy's profit.' The irony of displacing wildlife from land in the village in order to conserve other species was also commented on in these highly rewarded responses. Similarly, the claim that local people would be pay less to enjoy the Zoopark experience was disputed by careful readers who commented that frequent visitors rather than local people would be rewarded by the Park-Pals scheme and that villagers were unlikely to visit the Zoopark regularly.

Marks in Band 2 were given where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of seven was awarded for many responses where some thoughtful inferences were made from the passage, even if most points were reproduced rather than evaluated. At this level, the Zoopark proposal was generally welcomed as an opportunity to improve Speizet's profile and its prospects for a more prosperous future but there was some evaluation shown through closer examination of some ideas in the passage. Often, the different interests of the village and the Zoopark company were discussed with some acknowledgement that these were not always compatible. The identification of Speizet as a 'sleepy' village was sometimes challenged in responses which went on to discuss the peace and quiet which was intrinsic to its character and a desirable quality which would be ruined by such a large scale development. The idea of the Zoopark as out of keeping with its surroundings was explored more explicitly by some candidates who generally were in favour of it. Examiners

rewarded as evaluation comments derived from the ideas in the passage such as the need to conserve species being a sound ethical reason for keeping animals in captivity or that children who could study animals by being close to them were advantaged by this kind of experiential learning over those who never saw them in real life. Where there was a wider range of ideas which were commented on rather than reproduced, examiners could award eight marks, although for marks in Band 1 a more consistently critical stance was taken and more probing and challenging of attitudes and assumptions was evident.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding the main arguments made by Guy Pensivy and generally agreed with a range of different points made in the passage. The passage was carefully reorganised so that the benefits and pitfalls of the proposal were coherently addressed but responses tended to list the objections raised by the interviewer then those ideas and arguments offered by Guy Pensivy. Some personal preference or opinion was often given at the end of the article but at this level such comments did not amount to evaluation of the issues raised in the passage. Where there was enough range and discussion, examiners could award a mark of six. Responses with more limited selection were given five. Some responses were given five where there was some understanding of the main features of the passage but there was also some drifting from the task. In these cases, responses lost focus on the Zoopark proposal itself and digressed into the morality of keeping animals in captivity in general, rather than in the specific circumstances of Speizet.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or task, or addressed the material thinly. Where a mark of four was awarded, some firmer links with the passage and a wider range of points was needed, whereas three was generally given for very thin or brief responses. Marks below three were very rarely given and usually applied when the passage was mostly copied or only a few lines were written. One approach which examiners noticed below Band 3 was the rewriting of the interview itself in the candidate's own words but with limited understanding of the task or the ideas in the passage. Common misunderstandings at this level also were that local people would be charged less for entry to the Zoopark or that the organisation was a charity which was set up for the benefit of animals.

Marks for writing

Fifteen marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

The task required the style, tone and structure of a newspaper article and most responses were written with some awareness of the intended audience. The best responses often adopted the tone and style specific to local newspapers where a shared experience of living in a particular place and time was assumed in quite subtle ways. References to 'our peaceful little hamlet' or 'the pretty countryside of which we are all so proud' helped to show the conscious adaptation of style and language to address the audience. Sometimes, an effectively persuasive tone was adopted as if the newspaper, as many do, had taken on a campaign in the community either in favour or against the proposal. Many article titles such as 'Zoopark, bane or boon?' or 'Zoopark set to shatter our peace' showed an understanding of the way articles are often written as polemics which represent both sides of the argument but have a view or an angle to promote. Responses given high marks were well organised and the arguments were given more weight by careful structuring of sentences within paragraphs. For example, some began each paragraph by examining one of the main benefits as outlined in the transcript and then offering some comment on its value. Some rhetorical devices were used judiciously at this level, often as questions to express incredulity or encourage a more sceptical view of the proposal. For example, after a discussion of Pensivy's assertion that there would be no repeat of the incident where an animal escaped, one candidate wrote, 'Do you really expect us to believe that making an example of one staffer is going to deter animal rights campaigners, Mr Pensivy?' Another Band 1 candidate finished the article with 'If you want to fill the pockets of greedy businessmen to destroy the village we all love, go ahead. But don't say we didn't warn you.'

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate with some lapses in candidates' awareness of the audience so that the response as whole became more an account of what was said rather than a response to it. A clear sense of purpose and audience was needed for marks in Band 3, even though some of these responses relied on reproduction of points in the passage. Most at this level were able to gauge what was an appropriate register for the task although there was some inconsistency, especially towards the end. Some given marks lower than Band 3 showed less awareness of the intended audience and made straightforward statements about what was said by both sides.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. At the highest level, the bullet points were addressed in an integrated way, showing an assimilation of the passage and a skilful evaluation of the arguments in it. At the highest level, an overview of the issues underlying the passage, such as how far the business model for the Zoopark and the need to make a profit would conflict with the needs of local people and the animals, was evident, rather than an outline of what each speaker in the transcript said.

Responses given seven, eight or nine for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. Responses opened with a considered introduction and there was usually an appropriate ending, sometimes with some rhetoric or other technique which showed an awareness of audience. Many at this level were straightforwardly but clearly organised into paragraphs outlining potential benefits followed by possible drawbacks to the Zoopark proposal. At the lower end of Band 3, responses sometimes structured their responses too closely to the sequence of the passage, resulting in some lack of cohesion and purpose overall as the arguments and counter-arguments alternated in the interview.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the passage, often using some of the language in it, with a general introduction, although many stopped abruptly with no real concluding comments.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Precision in the control of a subtle and ambitious vocabulary resulted in some very high marks in this component. In some otherwise quite accurate responses, lapses in the selection of appropriate vocabulary or sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary precluded examiners from awarding marks in Band 1 though examiners found fewer instances than in the past where complex vocabulary was frequently misused.

Responses given seven, eight or nine were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. The style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, but at this level a range of fairly straightforward words was misspelled and there were errors in punctuation, though rarely very serious ones. The spelling of words included in the passage was sometimes insecure, including 'enclosures', 'sanctuaries' and 'business'. Sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 3 and there were mis-selected homophones, usually 'their' and 'there' as well as 'your' and 'you're'. Expression and grammar errors also sometimes reduced the mark available for writing here. Agreement between pronouns and verbs sometimes became insecure or tenses varied. Incorrect plurals, such as 'cattles', and singular forms used where plurals were necessary, were fairly common too. Some responses were affected quite badly by these errors which, although not necessarily damaging to the style in themselves, were too frequent to allow for marks in Band 2.

While some of these more minor errors could be compensated for by a secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures or frequent lapses in grammar often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed some clarity in conveying meaning. In others, there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation, spelling and grammar errors which meant that examiners could not award in Band 3. As well as those errors mentioned above, the use of the pluperfect tense where it was not needed was common and sometimes the omission of definite and indefinite articles seriously affected the ease with which meaning was conveyed. Commas were sometimes used inappropriately, in the wrong place within sentences and phrases. Key words in the passage were more frequently misspelled or misunderstood, such as 'captivated' for 'captured' and confusion between 'since', 'during' and 'until'. Similarly, a simplicity of expression and language, limited in range and complexity, sometimes resulted in a rather immature style which could not be given marks in Band 3. Candidates at this level would have benefitted from more careful proofreading of their writing to address these basic errors.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the writer's ideas and the attitudes underlying them
- Be prepared to challenge or question ideas in the passage
- Make sure you understand the task and which point of view you should adopt
- Check you understand whose voice you should adopt and who the intended audience is
- Look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- Think carefully about the kind of style which is expected for the task
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors such as sentence demarcation and for the spelling of key words which appear in the passage.

Section 2: Composition

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe a work of art that has been carefully created.

OR

3 Describe what you see, feel and hear in a place where you are sheltering.

Content and Structure

The second descriptive writing question was a more popular choice for candidates across the mark range. The best responses to **Question 3** were sustained, with a strong focus on describing the sights and sounds from the vantage point of a shelter and some detailed evocation of the narrator's state of mind and feelings.

Question 2 was less commonly selected but often very well executed. Again, examiners noted different interpretations of the question which managed to capture a sense of beauty and appreciation, as well as admiration for the craft and creativity involved in making a painting or other object. Interpretations which elicited high level descriptive writing included a new-born baby and a view of the city of Delhi. The first of these conveyed a convincing sense of awe and wonder while describing an image of tiny perfection through detailed observation. One candidate described a volcano as 'God's art' and managed to evoke a sense of power and energy in nature which was very effective. Classic cars or more modern examples of beautiful cars were described by some very accomplished writers. The focus on well observed details as well as a reflection of the narrator's reactions and feelings worked well to recreate these very different scenes whereas in the middle and lower ranges responses tended to be more clichéd. Sometimes the writing became a little general, with description of brushstrokes or ornate picture frames which were difficult for the reader to visualise. The preamble to the description of the object itself sometimes overwhelmed the piece: descriptions of the journey to and around a museum or narrative accounts of a trip to a gallery sometimes limited the focus on the task, for example.

Question 3 was a much more popular choice, selected by candidates across the mark range. In the best responses, the idea of 'sheltering' was interpreted in various, often imaginative ways, sometimes with a sense of someone hiding from danger of different kinds. The stifling claustrophobia of a crowded Underground station in London during heavy bombing of the city above was the scenario chosen by one candidate who used the limited time from the siren going off to being given the 'all-clear' to help frame and structure the description cohesively. The response contained some striking details and images which effectively evoked the poverty, fear and shock of the people who hurriedly gathered in the station. Other scenes described well included the inside of a hollowed-out tree trunk from where the narrator sheltered from a powerful storm and a small cabin in a forest where a family escaping from marauding soldiers in their village took sanctuary.

In the middle and lower range of marks, Band 3 and below, examiners sometimes found the idea of a 'shelter' or 'sheltering' was missing from candidates' responses or was not well understood. There was also a tendency to narrate a sequence of events rather than describe what was seen, heard and felt, even where the idea of finding shelter was key to the response as a whole. Narratives involving escapes from places of danger sometimes lacked descriptive detail and focus. Descriptions of abandoned houses, caves, views from high buildings and other scenarios seemed to have more connection with questions from previous series than with this question, although in some cases there was some attempt to include a place which could be described as a 'shelter'. The quality and effectiveness of the writing varied but in most cases the response was paragraphed and organised coherently. In some, while the content was relevant, responses tended to

be more factual accounts than descriptions and there were weaknesses in cohesion and structure where observations were described but listed without links between paragraphs or sections.

The highest marks for Style and Accuracy were awarded where a precise and varied vocabulary and appropriate, varied sentence structures were used. Images, words and phrases, as well as varied sentence lengths, were employed to create specific effects in the best responses in order to capture and sustain the reader's interest. Middle range responses were generally secure in style with some lapses in expression or imprecise vocabulary. Occasionally, an over-ambitious style in which the meanings of words used were not precisely understood tended to affect the style even where content was relevant and interesting. In weaker responses, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verbless sentences were common. Grammar errors, usually in agreement, were also common at this level.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Try to include a more individual and original selection of descriptive details
- Keep the timespan of your writing short to avoid lapsing into too much narrative
- Think about the kind of atmosphere you want to evoke in your description
- Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects
- Be sure you know the precise meaning of the words you choose.

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story which involves an argument which should have been avoided.

OR

5 Write a story that begins, 'It was clear that the room had been abandoned in a hurry ...'

[25 marks]

Both narrative questions proved popular and a wide range of interpretations of the titles was evident. In **Question 4**, arguments with parents and siblings, often with dire consequences, were a common focus for the narratives. Other stories included arguments with sports coaches, teachers, romantic partners and best friends. One of the most effective responses featured an alcoholic father conscious of constantly picking fights with his daughter whom he blamed for the death of her mother in childbirth. Others featured best friends who became estranged from each other after some betrayal or disappointment such as the discovery by one that the other had cheated in an examination or had fallen into bad habits. There was often some strong evocation of bitter regret or sadness in these more effective narratives, rather than a simple statement or a moral as often appeared in less successful responses. Characteristics of higher Band responses were the creation of credible and well-drawn characters and settings and where the argument was a pivotal point in the unfolding narrative.

In Band 3, the content of narratives was more straightforward and chronologically told. There was more predictability in the plotlines at this level, with many narrators being taught some hard life lessons when the estranged family member with whom they had argued was killed in a car accident or died in other ways which made reconciliation impossible.

Weaker responses were often simple tales of arguments which were later regretted or sometimes a series of events which were only loosely connected to the argument itself. Where the plot itself was credible and had some shape and sense of purpose, a mark of six was often given where more attention to characterisation and setting was needed to engage the reader.

Question 5 was a very popular choice for candidates at all levels of achievement. The opening line given in the question sparked candidates' imaginations in many different ways and there were some very well-constructed and engaging narratives in response to this task. For many, the opening line suggested the scene of some sort of crime or the location of some criminal or plotters who had made their escape before the narrator or protagonist had arrived. At the highest level, these crime stories often had a strongly delineated characterisation of the investigating detective at the heart of the story and engaged the reader by releasing information about preceding events slowly, often through the protagonist's thoughts and reactions. Other scenarios which accounted for the abandoned room and led to developed narratives included kidnappings of family members, children who had run away and young people who returned home from school to find their parents gone and the house empty.

These same plotlines often occurred in less successful responses but were less well managed or the story up to this point was simply narrated. Some protagonists who were tasked with solving the crime or mystery disappearance were less convincingly portrayed and although narratives given marks in Band 3 were often cohesive, the content involved too much action, such as car chases, and some unconvincing plot twists. The scale of some narratives was too broad, involving international drug rings or gangs, which made the action difficult to control and gave limited time to engage the reader with interesting characters and credible settings.

Weaker responses became more a series of events than a developed narrative or the denouement of the story was not well managed or lacked impact. Kidnappings were sometimes resolved with limited building of suspense or sense of danger or jeopardy. Detectives found unlikely clues or the complications of the plot were simply recounted without drama or shaping.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The highest marks were given where the style used was both polished and striking and where there was a conscious control of language in varied way to engage and intrigue the reader.

Errors in grammar and lapses in expression, as well as inadequate control of sentence structures, if persistent, limited some otherwise quite competent narratives to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. In many lower level scripts, the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Speech marks were sometimes not used at all and the omission of new paragraphs for new speakers made for rather confusing dialogue at times. Basic punctuation errors with misused or omitted capital letters, the misspelling of simple words, mis-agreement between verbs and pronouns and wrongly selected homophones affected the mark for Style and Accuracy at this level. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a plain style but punctuated sentences accurately, examiners could award a mark of seven or eight. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and grammatically weak in style. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- **Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing**
- **Make sure that the characters and setting are credible and developed**
- **Remember it takes more than events to keep your reader interested**
- **Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes.**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- Reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them.
- Choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable.
- Write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers.
- Demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments.
- Write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation.
- Revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting.
- Proofread their work carefully, as marks are deducted for typing errors.

General comments

The quality of the work submitted was high, and most candidates wrote accurately and used language appropriately. There was a wide choice of topics for each assignment and few examples of tasks that were set across the whole centre. This element of individual choice was commended and underlined the educational value of coursework.

Assessment was generally satisfactory, though occasionally inconsistent. More often than not, the marking of writing was slightly severe because comparatively rare errors were over penalised. There was also a tendency to penalise candidates who gave evidence of a wide range of vocabulary without using ambitious vocabulary.

The marking of reading was generally accurate except where candidates addressed the topic rather than the text chosen for study. Centres should remember that this is a test of reading and that the text is not merely a stimulus.

Folders were well presented and all contained copies of the text set for **Assignment 3** and an early draft. Centres are reminded that only one draft is required.

The annotation of the work varied from centre to centre. Some were most carefully assessed with many comments relating closely to the detail of the mark scheme. Others had only minimal comments that did not cover all the strands in the mark band where the mark was awarded. Although there were, in most cases, few errors, these were infrequently indicated in the final versions of each assignment.

There were some instances where specific corrections were made in the body of the draft. This practice is not allowed, although general comments about correcting types of error may be made at the foot of the text of the draft. There should be no comments in the body of the text or in the margins. However, in no case was it apparent that the correction of specific errors affected the marks.

Approach to coursework: suitability of tasks and reading texts

Nearly all tasks were appropriate to the interests and abilities of the candidates.

Many of the tasks set for **Assignment 2** were based on personal experience and there was a good deal of originality of content and some engaging expression of personal feelings.

Many of the tasks set for **Assignment 1** gave less evidence of personal involvement and were sometimes unduly factual. Some were very closely derived from websites and where the number of references cited was considerable, the Moderator assumed that the candidate had made a good job of selecting and reordering content. However, it was not always certain that the wording of the work would have been original. Where the internet is used in this way, teachers are especially asked to check the references and to comment on the originality of the phrasing. They are reminded that candidates should not copy whole phrases and sentences from sources unless they are specifically used as quotations.

While informative accounts were generally well structured and clearly communicated, candidates who constructed strong persuasive arguments on serious topics that were important to them scored the highest marks.

Most of the texts chosen for **Assignment 3** were satisfactory. However, some were far too long for candidates to be able to select ideas and opinions with which to engage. One text was far too short and was entirely informative. Candidates who chose a strongly opinionated text that was between one and two sides of A4, and who identified the writer's attitude and explored some of the arguments and ideas, scored the highest marks. Informative texts were rarely satisfactory since candidates could do little more than to summarise the facts, which limited their mark for reading to six at the most.

Compliance with syllabus requirements

There were three infringements in one set of folders where candidates had no narrative or descriptive work. Instead, they submitted three discursive pieces. In another case, the expressive assignment consisted of a long discursive section followed by an anecdote that did not fit the expectations of the mark scheme. One candidate submitted two assignments based on a reading text.

Administration: documentation

All forms were carefully completed and the marks were correctly transferred from one form to another and from the folders themselves. All addition of marks was correct. All necessary forms were included with the folders.

Internal moderation may have been useful in some centres where there was sufficient experience in assessing coursework for another teacher to be involved in validating the original marks.

Application of Assessment Criteria

It appeared that all centres understood the need to balance content, structure, style (including register) and accuracy equally. Where there was under/over balancing of one of the criteria, this led to a slight leniency or severity in the marks for writing. There was most likely to be some severity in the marking of writing rather than leniency, although this was not always the case.

Content: Expectations were high and there were no obvious examples of high marks awarded where there was little worthwhile substance. Occasionally, the storylines of **Assignment 2**, as in *The Haunted House*, were unrealistic and consisted of slightly immature series of events; these tended to be over marked.

Structure: Candidates created well-developed structures, and the paragraphs were sound. Teachers assessed structure well except where candidates wrote undeveloped lists of facts.

Style: Candidates presented their work in a good range of vocabulary and linguistic effect. A few candidates were limited in their use of varied sentence structures but this was not typical of most of the work. The only inconsistency in assessment was where teachers over-rewarded complex vocabulary, whether or not it was appropriate, and under-rewarded what was apparently less ambitious language.

Accuracy: Few candidates made many serious errors: the commonest was the omission of an appropriate article. Teachers tended to reduce marks slightly more than was justified.

The Marking of Reading

This was generally accurate, although candidates lost marks for avoidable reasons.

The most common was that they did not understand that this was a test of reading. Many candidates wrote about the topic and made little or no reference to the text. Merely understanding what the text was about in the most general of terms was insufficient. They were expected to respond to the writer's attitude to the topic and to justify this by the inclusion of several ideas and opinions which were to be developed and evaluated. Too many candidates merely expressed their own opinions on the subject and treated the text as a stimulus and not an opportunity to demonstrate skills of careful and thorough reading. The candidates were often given marks of five or six, when the maximum mark should have been four or fewer.

Where the text was factual candidates were often limited to summarising it, and these responses were correctly marked at five or six.

One candidate provided an excellent overview and then assimilated ideas from the text into a well-written essay. This response deserved the full mark of ten.

Comments on the Three Assignments

Assignment 1

While some of these responses demonstrated a personal interest and response, the majority were heavily dependent on references to internet websites, and it was not clear from assessment comments what each candidate had actually done with this material. This was true both of academic topics and travel writing. However, the range of topics was wide and most of it avoided the well-worn and unproductive topics of video games and the advantages and disadvantages of technology.

Topics included:

Should teenagers be allowed to fall in love?
Do grades determine potential?
Academics versus sports
Bystanders being active when witnessing crime
The importance of being popular

Topics that seemed too related to external sources included:

The evolution of the motor car
The Star Trek franchise
The life of the whale
Aircraft passenger safety

Assignment 2

Many of these accounts were apparently from personal experience, and some of them were engagingly written. Better candidates tended to select interesting and sometimes unusual details, whether writing about a real or fictitious moment. Reference has already been made to a few titles such as *The cemetery* where the content seemed too far-fetched to be engaging to the reader. Most of the narratives, however, were realistic and some at least bore a resemblance to real life experience.

Titles that excited the imagination included:

The forbidden hut
The clock tower
The isle of perpetual gloom
A night alone

Interesting descriptive titles were:

Factory on fire
Getting lost in a new city
A roadside tea stall
The eruption

Interesting personal narratives were:

A moment of success
Journey across France
My encounter with maturity
A day at the zoo

Assignment 3

The most appropriate texts were not too long and had a number of often controversial opinions and arguments that candidates could respond to in some detail.

Some texts were not suitable because they were simply too factual, such as *The rules of football* and *I am Ronaldo*. An article on social networking was very repetitive and had little of interest to say.

There were some good articles that invited a direct response and which were not too academically difficult for the candidates. Such texts were:

No homework goes viral
The importance of uniform
Luck and richness
Women are not cut out for politics
Is boarding school the best thing?

Final comments

The quality of the work in these folders was high and it was clear that most of the advice given in previous reports had been taken.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

Administration – General Points

- Cambridge requires a centre to provide **three different items** in the package sent to the Moderator: **Recordings** of the tests for every candidate entered on CD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered and a **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge. Each of these is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance and the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.
- We kindly request that centres use **digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software such as mp3, wav and wma – but not AUP. Please collate recordings onto either one CD or USB drive unless the cohort's size prevents this.
- Where the total mark for a candidate has been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed.

Generally, the standard of administration has been high this series. Where there were issues, the following applies:

- **A separate introduction is required for each candidate's test.** It is not acceptable for one generic introduction covering the whole of the centre's cohort to be included with the sample recordings.
- The examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. This must include the date on which the recording is made to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified window.
- Please check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD or USB before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.

Conduct of the test

When considering candidates' marks, the importance of **timings** must be appreciated.

- **Part 1 should be a minimum of three minutes.** Please note this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is short, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria such as 'sound' or 'full and well organised use of content' and 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting significantly less than three minutes. Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 1.
- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. **In Part 2 a minimum of six minutes of discussion is expected.** It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.
- It is unnecessary, and may even be counter-productive, for Part 2 discussions to last beyond the seven minutes maximum stated in the syllabus.

Candidates can take into the test one cue card containing prompt notes. These notes should not be written in full sentences or be read verbatim. A reliance on written material in Part 1 is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance.

The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in Part 2 is not permitted. When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during the discussion but there should be no collusion between the examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions penalise themselves. The discussions should evolve and to do this an element of spontaneity must be apparent.

The test should only be attempted once in any examination series. Once the test has begun it should not be re-started or interrupted.

Accuracy of assessment

In most cases, centres had applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures. Thank you.

Where there were issues the following applies.

Part 1

- Within the allotted three to four minutes for Part 1, examiners should not interrupt candidates unless they are struggling to say anything. If a candidate 'dries up' then the examiner should move on to Part 2.
- Otherwise, examiners should only interrupt to move candidates into Part 2 if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after five minutes. Letting candidates continue beyond five minutes is counter-productive.

Part 2

- One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in Part 2 for short discussions which were not of sufficient length or challenge to secure the higher bands.
- Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over assessed where the content was factual rather than extended.
- It is important that examiners do not over-dominate the discussions in Part 2. Successful candidates will be expressive and proactive. They are expected to respond in detail consistently throughout the discussion.
- Successful candidates will be prepared to lead the discussion and not just play a passive role by waiting for the examiner to ask questions.

Approaches to Part 1

Three factors underpin successful Part 1 responses:

- Candidates take ownership of a topic by choosing one that interests them
- Candidates have a good knowledge of the subject
- Talks are well-planned and prepared but not over-rehearsed to the point of artificiality. Neither do they rely heavily on notes. Natural fluency is essential.

Weaker candidates require greater input from centres in terms of preparation and technique.

Candidates should be reminded that simply regurgitating a talk that has been learned by rote will not merit marks in the higher bands. The Individual Task requires candidates to engage and sustain an audience's interest, in part by using language devices and tone; the way a talk is delivered is integral to the mark scheme.

It is relevant to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive to include elements of reflection and analysis.

Some examples of productive **Part 1** topics include:

- Traditional or Modern art?
- Why I love a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Conquering stage fright
- Cultural change and the issues it raises
- Insecurities
- Cricket and me
- My dream destination (but not just a travelogue)
- Can empowering women lead to a better world?
- Topical events – e.g. afforestation, global currency, gender equality
- Why books are better than movies
- Photography

Management of Part 2

Examiners conducted the discussions effectively and were supportive in their questioning to encourage and to settle nervousness. This helped students to achieve their best.

Examiners showed genuine interest in and enthusiasm for the candidates' topics and provided appropriate encouragement. This helped to put candidates at ease and created a more natural discussion.

Candidates were afforded many opportunities to develop their ideas fully. It is important for examiners to ask more taxing questions to allow candidates to highlight their abilities. If a question proves too difficult it is always possible to reword or indeed ignore it and move on in a different direction without the candidate being penalised.

Examiners should be aware that interrupting a candidate who has not completed a point is unhelpful, especially when it is more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue.

A Part 2 that consists of a candidate answering a series of questions asked by the examiner but otherwise remaining passive is not a successful format for a good discussion. There should be some ebb and flow in a natural discussion.

Advice to centres

- Prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. practise techniques/encourage research/think carefully about appropriate topics that fulfil the assessment criteria. Practise methods of presentation and discussion in other situations before preparing for this exam.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. For Band 1 to be awarded, responses are likely to be the required length.
- When conducting the discussions in Part 2, examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show what they can do.
- In Part 2, examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early as this can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.
- Follow the instructions on how to present the recordings and documentation efficiently and concisely. Please check everything before sending it to Cambridge.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

Four separate items should be sent to Cambridge as part of the sample for Component 6. These are:

- Recordings of all the Task 1 and Task 2 activities undertaken by the cohort entered sent on a CD, DVD or USB drive
- The **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered
- A **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge
- The **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for all the candidates entered.

Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.

Centres should use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full.

When completing the Individual Candidate Record Cards, specific information about the choices made for each task are more helpful than generic statements. A comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful.

Centres should use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a commonly recognised audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma (but not AUP) that can be played by standard computer software.

Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.

It is helpful if a separate track for each candidate is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.

It is not acceptable for a generic introduction for the entire cohort to replace individual introductions at the beginning of each individually recorded activity. The teacher/examiner should introduce each recording using the rubric in the syllabus.

For paired activities in Task 2, it would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task.

Unlike for Component 5, there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length but please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short. For example, a Task 2 activity lasting less than two minutes is not likely to produce a response in the higher bands.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged.

Comments on specific tasks

Carefully planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but these responses do not benefit from being over-scripted.

Task 1

The response to the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Centres are encouraged to allow candidates to choose their own topics, as opposed to dictating a generic theme. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when these choices are made. Able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that include an element of introspection and reflection within a compelling argument lasting three to four minutes.

*Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:*

- Traditional Art is best
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Why I love ... (a particular text/movie/work of art/etc.)
- My passion for ...
- My favourite place – but moving beyond just description
- Gender equality
- Why books are better than movies

*Some examples of less successful **Task 1** activities include:*

- Football (too generalised and lacking focus)
- Shopping
- My Pet
- Sports (too generalised)
- My best friend

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about. Alternatively, engaging in a lively role play can also be very effective. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. Evidence of higher order thinking skills is important for those candidates wishing to attain a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions.

Entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, generally do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

It is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than four minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed for both candidates, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded.

*Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:*

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as gender equality or equal pay
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal function
- The effects of social media on teenagers
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities
- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful if the assessment criteria are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group should consist of no less than three members. A group consisting of three or four candidates is recommended as accurately assessing a group including more candidates can prove problematic. It is not a requirement that Task 3 is recorded or sent as part of the sample.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- Planning a celebration or community event

General conclusions

The general standard of assessment by centres is at or near the correct level. Where the assessment is deemed inaccurate, it is normally the length of the responses, and the corresponding lack of evidence to support the attainment of the higher band, that is problematic.

Centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and this is greatly appreciated.