

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8001/01

Paper 1

General comments

The general comments for the previous examination session (November 2006) focused mainly on examination technique. It is pleasing to note that some Centres have responded to the advice given with the result that their candidates' essays were better structured with informative introductions and succinct summaries. Where the guidance has not been heeded, introductions were often unnecessarily long and even tortuous and contributed little to the essay as a whole. For instance, in answering Question 5 some candidates felt it necessary to spend up to a whole page describing the Internet before embarking on the main body of the essay. Conclusions were sometimes very brief, simplistic summaries

There was evidence that a higher proportion of candidates than usual had checked and corrected their English where appropriate. This saved them losing marks for careless, avoidable errors. There is no reason why this should not be common practice for all candidates.

The best essays were always fully focused on the question with due notice taken of key words, and were not digressive with scant reference to the question as set. Key points were well developed and supported by relevant examples which made them credible and convincing. But there are still too many candidates who do not refer specifically to the terms of their chosen question and simply write all that they know about the topic. Such essays are often characterised by generalisation, assertion and sweeping statements which cannot attract high marks. These candidates need more practice in adapting their knowledge to the specific terms of the question.

A wide range of ability was seen this year. More able candidates presented mature and sophisticated responses of high quality. By contrast, weaker candidates struggled to express themselves adequately in English and this inability often impeded the content of their essays as it was very difficult at times to follow the discussion. They often had a good vocabulary at their disposal but unfortunately had limited knowledge of how to use these words in their relevant context. Although such candidates knew the infinitive form of irregular verbs, they sometimes had no idea of the correct form of the past tense and past participle. This demonstrates once again the dangers of trying to acquire new vocabulary on a simplistic word-for-word equivalent basis instead of using a short phrase or sentence to remember the context and the correct form.

A small minority of candidates numbered their paragraphs. It is recommended that this be discontinued. If candidates are using an answer booklet without a margin they should rule one on each side – this is helpful, not just for the Examiner, but also in case extra words/phrases need to be inserted by the candidate.

Rubric infringements were rare this session.

Candidates seemed to have no problems with the time allocation for the paper.

Quite a few candidates resorted to counting every word on their scripts instead of concentrating on a thorough check to spot and correct careless mistakes. Some candidates need to be reminded that it is not necessary to write as much as possible. They often handicap themselves in such cases by digressing and becoming too descriptive. There is also the danger that the quality of the English may deteriorate in overlong scripts.

Use of English

There was wide variation in candidates' ability to write English fluently. Some of the candidates have virtually full operational command of the language but the weakest candidates are unable to express themselves with any accuracy to the detriment of the content. However, in most cases, even if the English is not absolutely accurate or the idiom is sometimes not appropriate, there is no major problem comprehending what the candidate wishes to state.

A systematic eradication of the very common errors in the following list is the quickest route to high marks for the use of English:

- non-agreement of subject and verb due to carelessness rather than lack of knowledge
- non-agreement of subject and possessive pronoun e.g. *the companies have its headquarters*
- missing endings on plural nouns,
- incorrect use following 'one' e.g. *one has his problems* instead of 'one's problems'
- omission of the definite article
- confusion between *their/there, to/too, here/here*
- use of 'latters' - a word which does not exist
- incorrect use/omission of apostrophes e.g. *its not his job* and *the sun has lost it's power*
- incorrect comparative forms such as *more easier, more richer, more harder*
- carelessness with past participles of regular verbs e.g. *she has played and dance all day*
- omission or incorrect use of commas

All these points have been pointed out regularly in past reports. They are basic errors which, in most instances, are not caused by lack of knowledge but by carelessness. It makes the need for a systematic check at the end of the examination all the more important. It is frustrating for Examiners to have to award lower marks for Use of English when it is plain to see that some candidates, with due care and attention, might have achieved a higher mark

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most answers to this looked at 'ordinary' people and paid tribute to their contribution to the nation as soldiers who repulsed the enemy or who acted as an irrepressible force, following inspirational leaders, to overthrow tyrannical rulers and corrupt systems. The French and Russian revolutions were often mentioned as examples. Better answers analysed the role and participation of the average citizen in such democratic processes as elections and referendums.

Question 2

This question was less popular than anticipated. Unfortunately, quite a number of candidates misinterpreted 'overrated' and consequently were not able to answer the question properly. Better answers for the proposition pointed to the enormous media coverage which was often at the expense of more serious concerns. They condemned the huge incomes from sport, sponsors and advertising and, especially in the case of soccer, they believed too many players to be poor role models. The problems of performance enhancing drugs and other forms of cheating were also discussed. Those who supported the proposition pointed to the advantages of exercise for health in general and stressed the usefulness and benefits of teamwork in sport and other walks of life. Staging such major world events as the Olympic Games was often seen as a reason for national pride as were the achievements of successful teams and athletes.

Question 3

Few candidates attempted this question. Even fewer engaged fully with the notion of 'how far?' discussed equality rather than 'equal opportunities' and cited the case of communism as evidence that equality could never be achieved. Better answers highlighted the significant lack of progress towards equality of opportunity in many developing countries for such reasons as caste, class and religious beliefs. It was also seen as a low priority issue in countries grappling with poverty, low economic growth rates and frequent natural disasters. Some candidates acknowledged recent legislation in developed, democratic countries aimed at offering equal opportunities for all, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion and class, particularly at work and in education. They were also aware of the difficulties in implementing such measures.

Question 4

This was a reasonably popular question. More able candidates were able to illustrate that there is more to school than academic subjects, e.g. experiencing socialisation, competitiveness and discipline. It was stressed by many candidates that learning, both by making mistakes and by learning from a wide range of experiences, develops a person's character and personality. The influence of parents and the home environment in early years was also identified as a significant determinant in the life-long learning process. Weaker candidates tended to compartmentalise the stages and types of learning, thus missing the overlap and the continuity. Few candidates ventured into the fields of leisure activities and hobbies.

Question 5

This was the most popular topic on the paper, and candidates were obviously on familiar ground here. Most could list and contrast quite a number of advantages and disadvantages. They were very concerned about the use terrorists can make of the communication facilities offered by the Internet and worried about the potential corruption of the young. Parental controls were either not mentioned or dismissed as unreliable. Quick access to information was universally praised but better candidates did question the reliability and accuracy of some sites. Cyber-crime also figured prominently, but few mentioned secure sites. Many concluded that harm or help from the Internet is in the hands of the individual user. They also felt that policing of the Internet was insufficiently developed and that some form of governmental control should monitor sites and block the worst excesses.

Question 6

While this was not a popular option, Examiners reported some interesting and sophisticated answers to it. A few excellent responses were able to doubt and even pick holes in the main arguments of both camps. The majority of candidates analysed the battle between scientific evidence and religious faith which has been going on for centuries. Galileo and Darwin were frequently used as examples. A number of devoutly religious candidates argued that science proves faith. The current clashes between religious and scientific attitudes over cloning and stem cell research stirred much controversy.

Question 7

This had very few takers. Those who attempted it did appreciate the practical usefulness of mathematics in everyday life but often failed to see the relevance of maths to other disciplines such as engineering, physics and economics. Candidates who disliked mathematics lessons thought the teaching was boring and not relevant to their needs because they could see no real application for it.

Question 8

This was a moderately popular question. Most answers focused on internal safeguards, general precautions and border controls. The element of 'being prepared' was sometimes partially neglected. Examples of recent outbreaks of SARS and bird flu were given but the discussion tended to centre around counter measures rather than preparedness. The important role of International cooperation and World Health Organisation programmes was duly discussed and analysed in better answers.

Question 9

This was a popular topic but was seldom done very well. Weaker answers focused mainly on advertising informing consumers about new products. Little was said about keeping established products in the public eye. The element of 'entertaining' was often totally overlooked. This was a topic crying out for illustrative

examples but poorer responses failed to provide them. Better answers dealt with commercial advertising but also gave examples of local and national awareness campaigns warning against such dangers as smoking, taking, Aids and driving under the influence of alcohol. They also discussed how some advertising is entertaining thanks to humour, jingles or word play. They then provided examples to support their views.

Question 10

This had relatively few takers. Candidates were aware that the reporting of news items is generally purely factual but that the comments and analyses of these items can be very biased depending on personal and political persuasion. Better answers discussed how banner headlines were designed to sell papers rather than properly reflect the content of the main news stories. They also realised that dictatorial regimes would only allow the 'official' interpretation of the news whereas democratic countries relied on various forms of institutional and independent monitoring. They were also alive to the vagaries of celebrity gossip which they sometimes seemed to enjoy.

Question 11

This was a moderately popular question. Unfortunately, quite a number of candidates focused mainly, or even exclusively, on *what* we say rather than *how* we say it. Better answers did deal with such elements as accent, pronunciation, slang, dialect, regional variation, grammatical accuracy and range of vocabulary as indicators of intelligence, cultural background and education but were also aware of the limitations of initial judgements of people based on their speech.

Question 12

This question was moderately popular. Better answers gave good reasons why old buildings should be kept for historical, cultural and educational purposes and named appropriate examples. Such answers also discussed the need for modern health and safety issues to be applied to older structures as well as modern, more efficient buildings. No reason could be found as to why the old and the new could not co-exist. Weaker answers were generalised and often failed to name a single modern building of particular note.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8001/02

Paper 2

General comments

In some respects, there was a marked improvement in examination technique on this occasion. There was hardly a candidate who attempted more than one question or who defined or illustrated more than six words in **Question 15 (f) (i) and (ii)**. In answers to all three questions, more often than not, guidance over word-length was heeded whilst the indiscriminate lifting of words or phrases from the original material was an issue only in **Question 15**. A fair number of candidates, on the other hand, included the questions themselves in the body of their answers or wrote at great length for a handful of marks when not instructed to do otherwise. More generally, all but the most able candidates succumbed, yet once again, to the temptation to labour one point rather than branch out in questions that clearly expected a wide perspective. In this regard, it has to be emphasised that no individual point in an answer will ever attract more than a couple of marks.

As regards choice of question, a sizeable majority of candidates chose to tackle **Question 14**. The language used in the dialogue was immediately accessible and the background situation familiar enough to anyone who had experienced the life of a boarder at an educational establishment. There were far fewer candidates than hitherto who elected to attempt the traditional comprehension exercise, **Question 15**, without the necessary skills for the task. The weakest candidates, though, may have been inclined to look no further than **Question 13**, which is where many of the weakest responses were seen). Given a quarter of a hour in which to do so, candidates, whatever their ability, should skim through the whole Paper at the outset of the examination and should not rush into any exercise without, at least, consciously rejecting the other two. As always, there was little or no evidence of candidates having been pushed for time although some saved up what they felt were the more challenging answers until the end.

Comments on specific questions

Question 13

Over the years, there have been many assignments set on the best way forward for a particular area, organisation, event or community. In these scenarios, there have always been conflicting priorities and heterogeneous factors that have to be assimilated and weighed up one against another before any pronouncements can be made. Whereas the information provided is never too technical to be grasped, it is invariably presented in a variety of ways and in a random order while, as in everyday life, some of it may be irrelevant or duplicated. Candidates, therefore, who cannot see the wood for the trees when confronted with a mass of detail, owe it to themselves to explore the rest of the Paper where there might be more congenial tasks for them. On this occasion, the logistical implications of much of the data eluded all but the most astute. Consequently, they made little headway with either specific considerations or wider issues and rarely appreciated that what would benefit one set of people would disadvantage another.

- (a) This series of questions focused on restricted aspects of the traffic problems of Vutet and did not call for lengthy answers that dealt with major concerns. All too often, however, up to three sides were written in the most general terms possible, the only relevant point made being that each development or regulation either lessened or increased congestion. Candidates, moreover, frequently misunderstood what they had read as when, for example, they claimed that coach passengers had to walk two kilometres between the coach park and the town and two kilometres back again.

- (a) (i) Candidates limited their scores when they became obsessed with landslides and the viability or otherwise of re-opening the rail link between Ugoh and Werthero rather than on the immediate impact of such a closure on previous railway passengers and existing users. The least successful did not even realise that the railway shown on the diagram was one that had been cut.
- (ii) There was some limited awareness of the rationale behind the closing of the main tourist attractions every Wednesday, when the markets were at their busiest, but all too many candidates conveniently forgot that an average of 50 coaches would still disgorge tourists in the town on that day of the week. Again, it did not occur to them that such visitors would clog the market area since there was nowhere else for them to go.
- (iii) Answers usually proceeded on the right lines but tended to dwell on the negative consequences of setting down and picking up passengers along the Xantippian Way and not to point out the manifest merits of the whole system.
- (iv) It was quite often recognised that banning parking in one part of the town would worsen the situation elsewhere but that such restrictions might encourage tourists to travel by coach. The more subtle ramifications for both tourists and residents seldom, however, featured in answers whereas gratuitous worries over pollution commonly did.
- (v) It was usually accepted that special discounts would attract more tourists on certain days but relatively few candidates came to the conclusion that more coaches could mean fewer cars, thus mitigating rather than aggravating congestion.
- (b) All that was required in this question was a comprehensive yet concise coverage of the various problems that would be encountered by preserving the status quo with every kind of vehicle being allowed into Vutet at all times. All the candidates had to do was to select salient facts from the information that had been supplied and to show that they had understood what was entailed. In the event, it was common for candidates to write as though a free-for-all was a proposal rather than what had obtained for so long. Worse still, the phrase 'unrestricted access' was often taken to signify the exact opposite so that candidates found themselves arguing against the regulation of traffic and for the existing unsatisfactory state of affairs. Just as frequently, candidates spent most of their time on possible solutions, the result being a great deal of irrelevance. Time and again, too, candidates failed to clinch a point as when they suggested that heavier traffic meant increased pollution but omitted to mention poor health occasioned by breathing problems or referred to traffic jams but neglected to specify where and when. Even when candidates were right on course, as a rule they concentrated on aspects of gridlock to the exclusion of much else.
- (c) The two most common errors made by candidates when responding to the question were to lose sight of the market traders entirely and to write about Option A in terms of Option B, or vice versa, rather than keeping them separate. Many valid objections to such drastic proposals were overlooked but most candidates did make the general point that any restrictions on the market traders' mobility would be bad for their business and would result in lower profits. On occasion, there was undue concern that the town and tourists would be deprived of essential supplies if the stalls ran out of goods.

Question 14

Responses to this question were generally much more successful than those to the previous question. Although sometimes none too accurate over the finer points of detail, as when they wrongly assumed that most students had gone back to their living quarters on the Saturday afternoon in question, candidates who answered it were usually extremely shrewd in their assessment of the general situation at the educational establishment and dealt with conflicting circumstantial evidence with considerable assurance. All were aware that guilt should only be established on the basis of conclusive proof. Such was the enthusiasm of some candidates, when mounting the case for or against the alleged vandal Mercury, that one suspected that they had come across, if not identified with, such a person in real life. Be that as it may, what they wrote made entertaining reading.

- (a) This was by far the most successfully answered question in the whole Paper, direct quotation from the text being as acceptable as loose paraphrase. Candidates who saw what was required normally easily identified five relevant pieces of evidence and, thus, scored full marks. Once in a while, though, candidates did not concentrate on the context of the library within the school or

college but on the library as a library. In such instances, there was much ado about the administrative routines involved in using a book of reference or of the precise layout of the supposed scene of the crime.

- (b) In both this and the next question, there was clear evidence of candidates reading the dialogue between the Principal and the Librarian very closely to extract relevant material. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that answers tended to be reasonably comprehensive, unlike in Question 13. Some candidates, however, did waste words in setting the scene while others were content to introduce a clue, such as Mercury's being in the library only for a short while, without directly linking it with either his guilt or his innocence. Focusing on the case against Mercury, in their eagerness to convict him, some candidates made the rucksack 'walk' from the counter to the shelves while the Librarian was in the back office or condemned him simply because his main interest was sport and not visiting the library on a regular basis. Others readily admitted his misdemeanour but engaged in plea-bargaining, citing the demands that his teacher had made on the hapless, non-academic youth.
- (c) In Mercury's defence, most candidates drew attention to the fact that it would have been difficult for him to conceal the missing pages under a tee-shirt. They also pointed out that other more literate students who had the run of the library could have bamboozled the Librarian far more successfully than someone who was manifestly out of his element. Some candidates went even further and suggested that Mercury had been deliberately set up by his peers, either as a practical joke or to cover up the damage that they had done on a previous occasion. For almost every candidate, the crux of the matter was that Mercury was never actually seen with the book in his hands.
- (d) A fair proportion of candidates fell into the trap of making the source of the Principal's dissatisfaction not the way in which the Librarian had behaved on the particular occasion on which Mercury had attempted to do research on the dodo but the everyday routine in the library regarding such matters as shelf-checks and the scope afforded to regular users. In such answers, the Principal sometimes did not feature at all. Other candidates used the exercise as a further opportunity to exonerate Mercury. All the same, most candidates, either in their own words or in those of the text, did show that the Principal believed that it was wrong of the Librarian to leave a complete newcomer to the Library to his own devices. Moreover, the best answers exploited the sub-text whenever the Principal raised an eyebrow or remained silent when he could have come out on the side of the Librarian.

Question 15

The passage set for comprehension was relatively straightforward but was by no means lightweight. Candidates whose reading of the text had been perfunctory could not always distinguish between observers, trainers, trainees and the Rwandan people as in **Question 15 (b)** in which the tall stories told were sometimes attributed to the instructors rather than to those they were instructing. Again, quite a few candidates did not ascertain the totally different requirements of **Question 15 (c)** and **Question 15 (e)**.

- (a) The best candidates realised that three pieces of evidence had to be identified for three marks and proceeded to unearth the right material. Others did not discriminate between 'outsider' and 'observer' or worried away at Adjective Names without getting anywhere.
- (b) Candidates who gave cogent reasons why the trainers moved on quickly at one stage in the proceedings were in a minority although the wish to steer clear of conflict and the need to keep up the momentum were frequently hinted at. It was usually the case that the longer the answer became the less likely it was to score. The weakest candidates merely paraphrased the reactions of the course members to what they had just heard.
- (c) This was one of the few occasions in the whole Paper where word-length caused serious problems. Here, and in **(e)**, a preliminary draft would have made it plain that to produce a comprehensive answer one would have to be as economical with words as possible and not proceed much beyond expanded headings. By and large, candidates were clear enough about what goals the 'Serial News' exercise was supposed to achieve even though they often resorted to 'lifting'. Elsewhere, they tended to confine themselves to one intended effect for each workshop activity or to write in such vague terms that Examiners could not tell which session was being analysed. In particular, what the 'sharing of good experiences' exercise was about was seldom adequately appreciated. A handful of candidates confused intention and outcome.

- (d) This question sought a degree of empathy with the Gacaca judges faced with what they considered to be alien and inappropriate soubriquets. Candidates, in the main, had some sympathy for such a predicament and feelings. Moreover, they rarely wrote far too much. However, the fact that the Adjective Names were English rather than chosen from the judges' own tongue did not seem to bother anyone.
- (e) As indicated earlier, weak answers were merely a re-hash of (c), candidates appearing to be unable to distinguish strategy from tactics. In such cases, even the most obvious major aim of the AVP workshop, namely to train Rwandan Gacaca judges, eluded them. Good candidates, on the other hand, picked up straightaway what was required of them and made point after point, much of their material coming from the seven lines that introduced the actual narrative. The commonest response, however, was to start on target but to change the approach halfway and concentrate too much on specific activities. As in (c), 'lifting' and prolixity were all too much in evidence.
- (f) (i) Candidates were seldom far out when attempting to explain the meaning of the eight words that were selected from the passage but frequently forfeited marks when they failed to hone their definitions. Thus, they stopped within an ace of success when they provided 'robbed' as a synonym for 'looted' and 'change' as a synonym for 'transformation' without further elaboration. Similarly, they did themselves no favours when, for example, they treated 'reconciliation' as a verb or 'volunteered' as a noun. 'Arbitration' was the least popular choice for candidates and it was also the least understood. 'Ethnic' and 'domestic', by contrast, caused relatively few problems while only a handful of candidates tried to hedge their bets by supplying more than one definition for each word.
- (ii) On the positive side, 'reconciliation' was often successfully applied to marital issues and 'domestic' to chores, appliances or flights. Whereas some sentences simply used the chosen words correctly, as opposed to illustrating their meaning, there were fewer instances of candidates introducing the wrong part of speech or composing more than one sentence, on each occasion, than in previous years. Inevitably, misconceptions which had surfaced in (f) (i) took their toll in this exercise as well. In addition, 'ethnic' and 'domestic' sometimes featured in exactly the same context as in the passage while 'arbitration' was commonly confused with refereeing.