

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

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Paper 0990/11  
Reading 11

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through the tasks and texts in the order set
- read the introductions to texts carefully
- attempted all parts of all questions, noting the marks allocated to each question and organising their response time accordingly
- followed task instructions carefully and based their answers on the correct text and/or section of text
- responded appropriately to the command word(s) in the question
- focused on the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each question
- avoided repetition, inventing untethered material and/or introducing their own opinion
- used their own words where appropriate, avoiding unselective copying and/or lifting from the text
- offered precise, carefully selected quotation from the text to exemplify the writer's use of language
- planned and organised the ideas they were intending to use in longer answers
- checked and edited their responses to correct errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates' responses indicated that they were familiar with the format of the Reading paper and that the general demands of each of the three questions had largely been understood. There were some candidates who did not pay careful attention to command words in each question, the number of marks available and/or the instruction to use own words. Some candidates offered mechanical answers that simply replayed sections of text with little modification, or miscopied selections, missing opportunities to demonstrate relevant skills and diluting the evidence that they had understood what they had read. There were very few instances where whole tasks had not been attempted, though responses to part questions were sometimes incomplete or missing and/or answers were uneven, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks. A small number of candidates wrote too much in response to the early short answer questions; consequently, they managed only very brief responses to higher tariff questions later.

Candidates appeared to find all three Reading texts equally accessible and engaging; there were some excellent responses to extended answer tasks with few examples of significant misreading and some candidates going way beyond what is required for full marks. However, candidates do need to ensure that they do not spend too long on one question at the expense of another – for example, some discussed extra choices in **Question 2(d)** at length and left insufficient time for **Question 3**. In the least successful answers, a failure to complete all aspects of a task and/or a loss of focus on the rubric, limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered, or resulted in redundant material – for example, a few candidates attempted to select and explain choices from paragraphs other than 7 and 12 in the language question **2(d)**. Similarly, there were some less well-focused responses from candidates who had scored well in the smaller sub-questions but missed opportunities to target marks in other higher tariff tasks – for example, by writing considerably more than the maximum of 120 words advised and/or not using own words for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**. Candidates are reminded that for the selective summary, exceeding 120 words is likely to lead to a loss of concision and the introduction of excess, affecting both reading and writing performance. Likewise, use of own words where appropriate in **Question 1(f)** is an indicator for both Reading (understanding) and Writing skills. Candidates are reminded that the word guidance offered in **Question 2(d)** and **Question 3** is offered to help them to organise their time efficiently and present sufficient evidence of their skills and understanding to target higher levels. Writing significantly below the word guidance in these questions is likely to limit the evidence candidates can offer. The use of own words is required to target higher levels in all three extended tasks (**Questions 1(f), 2(d)** and **3**).

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in **Question 1 (a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as a helpful indicator of the length and detail they needed to offer in each response. They did not add further unnecessary material and focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates were careful to follow the line or paragraph references in the questions to help them to move down **Text A** in order and direct their attention, though a number of the least successful responses tried to answer questions based on one part of the text from another and/or by unselective copying. Most candidates remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from **Text A** to evidence their Reading skills and are not based on their opinion, imagination or experience. Where they needed to add to or amend an answer using an additional page, candidates did not always label the extra part of their response clearly.

Less effective answers attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)** taking up valuable examination time by doing so, as well as diluting evidence of understanding. Several candidates offered circular answers in one or more of their responses, repeating some or all the language of the question where own words were specified as required, and/or addressed only part of the question in their answer. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding and missed marks they might reasonably have been expected to target – for example in **1(b)(ii)** by suggesting that ‘different perspective’ means ‘looking at it in a different way’. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates relied heavily on the language of **Text B** and/or copied out chunks of text, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates needed to identify (in **2(a)**) and explain (in **2(b)**) words and phrases from the text, moving to offer comment on how language was being used by the writer in **Question 2(c)** and on to more extended explanation in the language task, **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were careful to refer to **Text C** to locate specific relevant choices and consider their meaning in context. In **Question 2(a)** those who copied out beyond the exact word/phrase that matched the sense of the underlined word/phrase in the question were not providing secure evidence of their understanding. Likewise, opportunities for marks were missed by a few candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify just one example from the text in their explanation and attempted to offer a generalised overview instead. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should ensure that they explore and explain the meaning of each of the words they have chosen in some detail before moving on to consider associations and connotations or suggest effects. Most candidates were able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task and offer a little basic effect/meaning in context, though several candidates were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less successful responses, overlong selections, generalised comment and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed. A small number of candidates did not address the **Question 2(d)** task effectively, offering little relevant comment and/or few or no clear choices in one or both halves of the question.

In **Question 3** most responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task, though a few candidates lost sight of the text – for example, writing advice for training for a competitive race– an idea not suggested or rooted in the text. Others based their response on their own real or imagined experience of visiting New Zealand which were not relevant in this Response to Reading task. Most candidates had remembered to write from Anna’s perspective, with the best focused on interpreting the evidence in the text with the benefit of hindsight. A few were less focused on task and text details and missed opportunities to develop. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers offering responses that used a wide range of ideas, carefully interpreted and extended with detail from the text in support. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus, a lack of planning beforehand and /or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less successful responses either offered only brief reference to the passage, included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

Whilst Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Question 1(f)** and **Question 3**. In these questions, it is important that candidates consider the clarity and register of their writing. It is advisable to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that inaccurate writing where meaning becomes unclear is likely to limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to read back and correct responses is advisable.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

#### **Questions 1 (a) – (e)**

Short answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read and respond to **Text A**. More effective responses paid attention to the paragraph references and command words in the instructions to demonstrate efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example through overlong explanations and/or missing key details of the question. Less successful responses often repeated the language of the text where own words were required and/or relied on copying longer sections of text with little or no modification to address the question as set. Some candidates missed opportunities to evidence close reading skills by attempting to answer a question based on one paragraph by reference to another.

Successful responses provided evidence that candidates had understood the need to interpret and use details in the text carefully to answer each of the comprehension questions to show what they could do and understand. They followed the order of the sub questions to work through **Text A** from the beginning, noting pointers where appropriate to help them to identify relevant material. Occasionally, opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where explanations offered were unclear or changed the meaning from that of the original text. Candidates are reminded that whilst Writing is not assessed in **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, answers do need to be sufficiently precise to communicate details from the text accurately.

#### **(a) What is an alternative name for a motivational speaker, according to the text?**

In **Question 1(a)**, most candidates had identified the alternative name provided in the text and saved time by writing just 'inspirational speaker' as their answer.

#### **(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) 'reputation as an expert' (line 3).**
- (ii) 'different perspective' (line 4).**

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance clarified that use of candidates' own words for their explanation was required to evidence their understanding. Where answers failed to score both marks it was often the result of having explained just one aspect of the phrase and repeated the words of the quotation for the other, for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** offering a meaning for 'reputation' only and repeating rather than explaining the word 'expert'. Effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the question in the context of the text, for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** making it clear that they recognised this was someone considered by others to be expert in that they understood the topic well and/or had considerable experience/knowledge of the topic in hand, rather than someone who just knew a lot in general. In **Question 1b(i)** successful answers often explained 'reputation as an expert' simply as meaning 'well known for knowing a lot about the subject' and in **Question 1 (b)(ii)** had understood the implication that a 'different perspective' suggested some kind of new, changed or alternative way of looking at things.

#### **(c) Re-read paragraph 2, ('The ultimate ... tactics.')**

**Identify two ways that a motivational speaker might have an emotional or mental effect on a person's life.**

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify the two distinct ways offered in the text, noting the repeated cue 'help' in the paragraph.

#### **(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 ('Some motivational ... television.')**

- (i) Identify two different types of online or live audience that motivational speakers might talk to, according to the text.**
- (ii) Explain why the job of a motivational speaker might appeal to some people.**

Candidates who paid attention to command/key words in the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and make efficient use of their time. Successful answers in **part (i)** recognised the key difference between the types of audience (both online and live) as presented in the text and were able to identify and offer both answers, scoring full marks. Likewise in **part (ii)**, candidates paying attention to the command

word ‘explain’ used information from the text, reworking it to offer secure evidence of close reading and score the maximum 3 marks. On occasion, candidates diluted evidence of their understanding through misreading/miscopying – for example, in **part (i)** offering ‘special guest’ which was not focused on the audience but the speaker. Others missed opportunities by offering ideas from paragraph 5 – for example, in **part (ii)** suggesting that speakers can make lots of money. Occasionally answers to **part (ii)** overlooked the word ‘job’ in the question and tried unsuccessfully to answer by talking about the appeal of using or listening to motivational speakers.

**(e) Re-read paragraphs 5 (‘There is ... successful.’).**

**Using your own words, explain why this expert does not consider that the speakers they have met are motivational.**

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations reworked the relevant information only, using their own words as appropriate, to identify three distinct reasons in their explanation of why this expert does not consider that the speakers they have met are motivational. Many candidates identified that predictable storylines were likely to affect opinion negatively, though some offered only this one point and so missed opportunities to target higher marks.

**(f) According to Text B, what were the writer’s reasons for giving up motivational speaking?**

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

**Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from **Text B** and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea, misreading and/or inclusion of extra details meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks. Some candidates referred to the writer as ‘he’ throughout their answer, suggesting that they had not read the introduction to the text carefully.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words and to keep their explanations concise. Overview was evidenced in some of the most successful answers where relevant ideas had been carefully selected from different parts of the text and organised helpfully for their reader. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original, often resulting in redundancy. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text. 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.

The most effective responses to the selective summary task showed evidence of candidates having planned a route through the content of their answer before writing their response. Many had produced and followed a bullet point plan. There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and precise understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible – without changing or blurring the original idea – and to organise points helpfully for their reader. On occasion, candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of lengthy explanation and/or the inclusion of personal comment on the speaker’s situation, with a few candidates continuing to write far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance. Others adhered to the advised length of the response but took far too long to explain just a few ideas. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately, clearly and concisely in their own words.

The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to select only those ideas relevant to the focus of the question, though not all were able to select ideas efficiently to navigate around more obviously redundant material – for example, the list of the writer’s achievements that are ignored once people know that she is a motivational speaker. The idea of the ‘tragic story’ was explained at some length by candidates who were attempting to simply track and translate the text rather than summarise key ideas. A small number of candidates attempted to include ideas from **Text A** in a summary based on **Text B**, introducing further excess and indicating a lack of focus on the task as a result.

More effective responses were not dependant on the structure or language of **Text B** to communicate their ideas and were consequently able to offer more concise explanations. Less effective responses sometimes relied on trying to offer an own words version of the whole text in the order it was presented – sometimes making only minimal changes such as moving from first to third person and often indicating less secure reading of meaning as a consequence of misreading/miscopying details which more focused answers did not include. The least effective responses were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original – candidates are reminded that lifting sections of text and splicing them together is unlikely to evidence understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task.

Advice to candidates on **Question 1(f)**:

- after reading the task instructions, re-read **Text B** to identify potentially relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan the ideas you are going to include ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan – check that they are distinct and complete
- check whether there are repeated ideas which could be covered by one ‘umbrella’ point
- discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the specific focus of the question
- return to the text to ‘sense check’ any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise, sequence and link your ideas to make them clear to your reader – do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the original text
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- check back to ensure that you have included all the ideas you planned to
- do not repeat ideas in any introductory or concluding sections of your summary
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 120 words’ and aim for concision.

## Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- Anna’s journey through New Zealand took her from one end of the country to the other.
- Anna was going to run the whole way with absolutely no help or assistance.
- Anna did think about buying a GPS to help her find her way.
- Kevin felt that lots of the people attempting it were not at all ready to deal with the challenges of the trail.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part only the correct word or phrase from Text C to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply and efficiently giving just the exact word or phrase as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out a longer section from the text and then bracketing or underlining their selection.

Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused – for example, offering responses that covered only part of the meaning of the underlined phrase such as ‘consider’ in **(a)(iii)** or adding in extra words from the text that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words such as ‘running’ in **(a)(i)**. Very occasionally, candidates had misread the instruction to ‘identify a word or phrase from the text’ and tried to offer an explanation of meaning in their own words.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

- perceptive
- quizzed
- trail

In **Question 2(b)**, some answers offered just one carefully chosen word or phrase as their answer, whilst others offered evidence of understanding through longer explanations. Either approach could be creditworthy, though candidates should be careful not to dilute evidence of understanding by offering various suggestions and extra guesses of different meanings that are contradictory and/or not in line with the text. Successful answers had considered the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined and checked that their suggestions did not move away from the intended sense, recognising for example that in



this instance ‘quizzed’ suggested a more searching drilling down and testing approach than simply ‘questioned’ or ‘asked’ alone. Several candidates were unsure of the meaning of ‘perceptive’ – for example, suggesting variously and incorrectly that it meant kind, worried or nice.

- (c) Use **one** example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests her attitude during the interview.

**Use your own words in your explanation.**

**I was sitting, star-struck, in the Southland FM’s Invercargill studio, marvelling at radio host Rach’s seemingly exotic accent. I already loved the way that people here pronounced my name as ‘Inna!’ I grinned widely from behind a microphone bigger than my head.**

**Rach continued: ‘So, are you brave or stupid?’**

**‘Perhaps both,’ I laughed enigmatically. ‘And excited.’**

In **Question 2(c)**, those candidates who had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract as instructed were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Some underlined their chosen example in the text, others copied it out as a subheading for their explanation – either approach was acceptable.

Successful answers included those which began with an explanation of the meaning of their example in context, ahead of going on to explain what the meaning suggested about Anna’s attitude during the interview. Successful responses often centred their answer around the image of being ‘star-struck’ or focused on the picture of Anna ‘grinning widely from behind a microphone bigger than (her) head.’

The most successful responses had noted the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Less successful responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwisely to paraphrase the whole extract and/or discuss it in very general terms. On occasion, opportunities were missed to offer evidence of understanding through circular answers that simply repeated the language of the text.

- (d) **Re-read paragraphs 7 and 12.**

- **Paragraph 7 begins ‘We discussed the attractions ...’ and is about Anna’s feelings ahead of the run.**
- **Paragraph 12 begins ‘No, I’d no idea ...’ and is about the natural landscape Anna encountered on the trail.**

**Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.**

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections from each paragraph – six selections in total – often beginning by explaining literal meaning of individual words within the choice before moving on to explore effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of focused choices centred around images, individual words or phrases. Where candidates had considered all the key words in slightly longer choices they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses. A few candidates tried to deal with all three choices together in a group – rarely a successful approach, as comments tended to become generalised and/or not clearly linked to particular words/phrases.

Some candidates used each of their choices as a sub-heading for their explanation of it to good effect, though candidates repeating the language of the text within their explanations missed opportunities to target higher marks. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain and discuss in some detail. Some of the most effective responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader’s impression,

building to an overview. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing language use and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question.

Many answers for paragraph 7 began with Anna’s description of the picturesque landscape that awaited her. Various interpretations of ‘showcase’ were explored – including the sense of performance or curated display it implied. Several answers went on to identify ‘framed by forests’ as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the artistic intention it suggested. Some of the best answers focused on the contrast between the persistent, consuming worry Anna felt initially and the sense of freedom and inspiration the interview brought about.

Some mid-range answers offered more careful selection and explanation in one half of their response than the other – with some indicating less secure understanding through inaccurate interpretation of the tarantula image in paragraph 12 as asserting that mean there were huge spiders on the route.

Occasionally candidates miscopied quotations from the text, resulting in some inappropriate or inaccurate explanations – for example, suggesting that Anna’s spirits were ‘sore’, or ‘sour’. Limiting their comments to an explanation of just one word within longer choices meant some candidates offered partially effective explanations only – for example, not all considered the word ‘gnawing’ and what it suggested about the nature of the worry that had been eating away at her. Many less effective answers dealing with the popular choice of ‘nagging self-doubt’ did little more than repeat/replay the wording of the text.

Explanations of paragraph 12 often targeted the ‘massive mountains’ and ‘giant sleeping tarantulas’ with the best answers taking opportunity to consider how ‘sprawled’ added to the sense of the imposing mountains stretched out across the horizon. Many had recognised the simile, though not all understood that the comparison to a spider suggested the shape and potential danger of the mountains. The best answers often discussed the suggested latent threat in ‘sleeping’.

The least successful answers to **Question 2(d)** offered generic empty comments such as ‘This line helps you to imagine what it was like for Anna’ or ‘the writer uses lots of adjectives and images in this paragraph’. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence understanding of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and can create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst more effective answers also identified effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images, using explanation of precise meaning/associations of the words used as the starting point for their explanation of effect. Less effective responses often only labelled devices and/or offered no more than a generic explanation of the writer’s reasons for using them.

Repetition of the vocabulary of the text to communicate ideas in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses – in particular, ‘confusing’, ‘complex’ and ‘giant’ were often repeated. Some less effective responses had misread individual words – for example, ‘punctuated’ had been read incorrectly as ‘punctured’ by several candidates and a few tried to explain how Anna’s spirits ‘lifted and roared.’

In **Question 2(d)**, it is the quality of the analysis when considering how language is being used 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. Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are unlikely to be useful and/or result in very thin general comments at best. Opportunities were missed in a small number of answers where choices were from one paragraph only or only three choices were offered overall. The most successful answers were often able to ‘talk their reader through’ their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why these particular words might have been used by the writer in this context.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise – do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- copy words and choices correctly from the text
- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from **Text C** and is clearly identified – remember you are looking for just a word or phrase to match the sense of the underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context (if unsure, try substituting your answer in the text to check it)

- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example – start by explaining what it means if you are unsure of what else to say
- in **2(d)**, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs (6 choices in total)
- only offer an overview in **2(d)** if you have spotted that there is a relevant connection between your chosen choices in a paragraph
- where you are trying to explain meaning, read your answer back to check that your explanation makes sense
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as ‘the writer helps us to imagine the scene’ – you need to say how your chosen example does this to show your understanding
- make sure your explanations deal with each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are unsure how to explain the effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice and work from there
- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

### Question 3

**You are Anna. After completing your run successfully you return to the UK and are asked to give a motivational speech to young people.**

**In your speech you should:**

- **explain the details of the challenge you undertook and the reasons you wanted to do it**
- **evaluate your preparation for the challenge and what you wished you had done or realised beforehand**
- **discuss the highlights of the whole experience, what you gained and why you would recommend your audience to take on challenges**

**Write the words of your speech.**

**Base your speech on what you have read in Text C, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.**

Having already familiarised themselves with **Text C** whilst working through question 2, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to adjust now to use ideas from the text, shifting the perspective to that of Anna once she had returned from her adventure. The task guidance invited candidates to evaluate, explain and discuss key details in a motivational speech, aimed at a young people.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms, and many were able to make effective use of relevant ideas and details from the text to offer convincing and often entertaining speeches. The best responses remembered this was a test of reading skills as well as writing, responding carefully to details of Anna’s experience as suggested by the passage, and did not stray outside the bounds of the text to offer unrelated generic training advice such as eating a carbohydrate high (or low) diet or getting up very early to run. Some candidates, losing sight of the task and text, invented terrifying/inspirational encounters with wildlife, dreadful accidents and/or disasters such as running out of food and water – none of which were in line with the material in the text and often ignored the fact that Anna had completed the run successfully. The least successful responses repeated material from Text C without modification and/or did not use ideas from **Text C** in their speech at all.

Whilst many candidates had engaged with both task and text to offer competent or better responses, evidencing close reading, misreading of some details was apparent in some responses in the mid-range. For example, the unlikely assertions in some answers that Anna had run 3000 km in 45 minutes or had run the whole of Australia carrying all her supplies in her backpack, indicated more careful reading of details was required. Others invented details of Anna’s situation that were not tethered to the text – describing a race across New Zealand with other competitors, cheering crowds and medal ceremonies. Where candidates had simply worked their way through the passage in order, and stopped once their responses reached 250 words, opportunities to include relevant ideas from later in the text were often missed. For example, the idea that one of Anna’s problems was her running the trail in the wrong direction was rarely used and whilst many



mentioned the mountains or forests in passing, few used the explicit reference later in the passage to the differences between those in Europe and New Zealand.

Bullet one was generally addressed successfully, with most candidates able to identify some of the explicit reasons Anna offered for wanting to complete the challenge. Most referenced the health benefits of exercise, often going on to explain her sporting childhood and the influence of her Olympian parents. Better responses often developed the suggestion in the text that she herself had experience of recovering from injury, though did not lose focus as some did to invent long backstories of how her injury happened. Despite discussing Anna's fear at some length in **Question 2**, fewer responses exploited their understanding of the potentially dangerous nature of the undertaking, though many did note that she was travelling unsupported, with some using that as a useful link into ideas relevant for bullet two such as the decision to take a tracker with her to reassure family and friends. Details of the route for the run itself (such as the length of New Zealand and the 3000 km-long Te Araroa Trail) were often included, but in less successful answers explicit ideas about the trail were more rarely evaluated or developed. Effective answers noticed Anna's enjoyment of being somewhere new and used the development to link in to highlights of the experience relevant to bullet three.

Ideas for bullet two were mostly referenced through detail, though more effective answers offered interpretation – for example, recognising and making explicit the implications that her decision to rely on maps/a compass rather than GPS was rooted in a romanticised, foolhardy wish to emulate adventurers of old. The best answers often did notice Anna's inexperience of this type of terrain. A number noticed that she had begun her journey at Stirling point, though fewer went on to explain the additional challenge that entailed. Most agreed Anna's preparation was inadequate and counselled against only reading 10 per cent of the trail notes, and/or only practising once with a full backpack, with better answers going on to develop and extend those points.

Where candidates had not identified and planned ideas in advance, they often overlooked details they might have used for bullet three to discuss highlights of the whole experience – for example, the radio interview with Rach and /or meeting Kevin. Most were able to encourage their audience in general terms to take on challenges and 'move out of their comfort zone', with the best answers carefully developing suggestions based on evaluation of Anna's approach that a positive mindset can bring success and that pushing yourself is important.

Overall, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of a speech and many were able to build convincing speeches, keeping their audience and purpose in mind. However, in some responses, awkward or unclear expression affected communication of ideas. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and that the register sounds consistently appropriate. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and/or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and opportunities to use language convincingly were overlooked. In some of the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon in these responses. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills.

### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- remember to base your answer on the ideas and details you find in **Text C**
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas you can use in your answer so make sure you have covered all aspects of each bullet
- 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 copy directly from the text: use your own words as far as you can to express ideas
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: developing ideas allows you to better show your understanding, for example by explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

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Paper 0990/12  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the introductions to Text C carefully
- followed instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- considered the marks allocated to each question and developed their response accordingly
- understood the different requirements of the extended response questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, writing no more than 120 words in the summary and using just one example from the given text extract in **2(c)**
- used only the information and ideas from the specified text in their responses to individual questions
- avoided unselective copying and/or lifting from the text where appropriate
- used their own words where specified in the question
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through extended responses before writing
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition in all questions
- checked and edited their responses to correct errors, incomplete ideas, or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the reading paper. The texts proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both texts and questions. There were relatively few examples of misunderstanding in terms of task requirements, and time-management was generally good with very few candidates not attempting every question. Occasionally a failure to follow the rubric, or complete a task fully, limited opportunities to demonstrate understanding. This was most common in **Question 1(d)(ii) and 1(e)** where some candidates did not attempt to find three points, in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates included a limited range of ideas in their responses, in **Question 2(c)** where a number of candidates did not select a clear example from the text provided, or in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates offered three choices of language in total rather than three choices from each paragraph as specified in the task, although fewer candidates failed to offer 6 choices in this session than previously.

In **Question 1**, the most effective approach taken by candidates was to work through the questions in the order presented, carefully noting the number of marks allocated and the space provided for their responses as helpful indicators of how detailed their answers needed to be. They also referred carefully to the lines or paragraph specified in each question moving carefully through the text as directed. Less effective responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the text or lacked relevance to the question. At times candidates used the language of the text where they had been asked to use own words – for example in **Question 1(b)(ii)** by explaining 'variety' but using the word 'positions' instead of offering an alternative. This was sometimes an issue in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates copied phrases (or whole chunks of text) rather than remodelling the language of the text in their response. Even where copying is selective, it should be avoided in **Question 1(f)** to demonstrate evidence of full understanding for the Reading mark and produce an effective response to the task.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to explain carefully selected words or phrases from specified sections of the text. **Question 2(c)** supplied a short section of the text to select from as a preparation for the longer response in **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were able to consider meanings in context and as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in a clear overview of the featured paragraphs. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding, although at times they tended to be literal rather than considered within the context of the whole text. Less effective responses struggled to develop viable

explanations sometimes repeating the language of the text in the explanations or identifying literary techniques with varying degrees of accuracy but then offering general comments about the techniques rather than focusing on the words themselves. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss or only selected three examples in total.

In **Question 3** most responses addressed all three bullets in the question, although some candidates found it challenging to develop the ideas from the text. Most candidates wrote as a journalist, writing an article about the job of a ski-lift attendant as part of a series on interesting seasonal jobs for young people, with the best responses producing a convincing article adopting a lively and enthusiastic tone suitable for young readers. More effective responses developed the ideas and details in the text selectively to work through the bullets logically. They were able to identify the attractions of Wanaka to a wide range of people from wealthy skiers demanding luxury hotels, private chefs and personal ski instructors, to backpackers competing for cheaper accommodation, there for the thrill of skiing and snowboarding on the perfect snowy slopes. Responses were then able to outline the responsibilities and duties of a 'liftie' focusing on which aspects of the role may appeal to young people, before moving on to consider the challenges and offer useful advice to any young person considering putting in an application.

Responses in the middle range tended to use the text more mechanically, often paraphrasing closely rather than selecting ideas and details to use in their own writing to demonstrate understanding. These responses tended to focus on the first part of each bullet point, thus losing opportunities to develop the ideas in the text through offering more developed explanations and advice. Less effective responses tended to lack focus on the text covering just a few of the main ideas and sometimes inventing material that moved too far away from the text itself. Several candidates used material from Texts A and B to offer general advice about securing a job in a ski resort, or to outline the advantages and disadvantages of seasonal work. Clearly these ideas could not be credited in **Question 3** which was based on Text C. Some responses copied unselectively thus providing little evidence of understanding.

Paper 1 is primarily an assessment of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – 5 marks in **Question 1(f)** and 10 marks in **Question 3**. In these questions, candidates need to pay attention to the clarity and precision of their writing to maximise their achievement. Candidates are advised to plan and review their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and to correct errors that may impede communication.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

##### **Questions 1(a)–(e)**

In response to Text A candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. More effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. These responses demonstrated sound understanding by selecting appropriate details and evidence from the text in concise, focused answers. Less effective responses tended to write too much or failed to follow the instruction to use own words. Some candidates offered several possible answers thus using time inefficiently and sometimes diluting evidence of understanding.

##### **Question 1**

- (a) **Give two qualities that are required to work a winter season at a ski resort according to the text?**

Most candidates identified and selected the two qualities of enthusiasm and a sense of adventure to get this mark. Occasionally the mark was not awarded because of excess information from the text, such as knowing how to ski or snowboard, meaning that the selection was not precise enough to demonstrate understanding.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) **‘staff quit’ (line 5):**
- (ii) **‘variety of positions’ (line 7):**

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were instructed to use their own words to evidence understanding of the phrases in the question. Where answers did not achieve both marks available for each phrase it was usually due to the candidate’s partial use of the words from the text. For example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** a number of candidates used the word ‘staff’ in their explanation of ‘quit’ thus partially addressing the task. In some responses the explanation of ‘staff’ was singular, such as ‘a worker’ or ‘an employee’, thereby ignoring the context in which it is used in the text where it clearly conveys that they lose a number of staff regularly. Some offered a word to explain ‘quit’ which was too specific in meaning and therefore not accurate in the context of the text, most commonly ‘retire’.

In **Question 1(b)(ii)** a number of candidates offered the word ‘various’ to explain ‘variety’ thus remaining too close to the original and some focused on the number of jobs available rather than the range of job types. Some candidates also offered vague meanings of ‘positions’ such as ‘options’ which did not really reveal understanding of the meaning in the context of the text. Candidates should be aware that the 2-marks offered for each sub-section of **question 1(b)** will always require all parts of the phrase to be explained clearly and precisely in the context of the text.

(c) **Re-read paragraph 3 (‘If you have ... dates.’).**

**Give two reasons why it might be difficult to ensure that you put in your application in time.**

To achieve both marks for this question candidates were required to offer two clear reasons. Many candidates offered the different application date ranges of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres as two points rather than one, so lost a mark. More effective answers were able to summarise this into one point and to include the fact the individual resorts also have their own application deadlines to gain both marks.

(d) (i) **Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5 (‘How long ... snowflakes.’).**

**Identify the two main decisions you will need to make before applying for a job in a ski resort.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify the two main decisions to be made before applying. Most candidates were able to identify that you would need to decide where in the world you wanted to work and how long you would be planning to stay for. Occasionally marks were lost due to vague answers such as deciding the ‘location’ which did not show full understanding of global travel, or simply alluded to getting the right visa without linking it to length of stay.

(d) (ii) **Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5 (‘How long ... snowflakes.’).**

**Explain the specific features of powder snow that make it the best snow to ride.**

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were effective at gaining all three marks available by referring clearly to the dry and light texture (or that it does not bind), the smooth surface (no bumps), and the thick layers (meaning a pillow-like surface). Own words versions of any of these ideas were also acceptable. A smaller number of responses only offered 1 or 2 of these points, not paying attention to the information that there were 3 marks available for this question.

(e) **Re-read paragraph 6 (‘Online guides ... flights.’).**

**Using your own words, explain why some people might decide not to apply through a recruitment organisation.**

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 6. Most candidates were able to achieve one mark, a reasonable number gained two-marks, but fewer gained all three. The most common correct idea was that the fees for

recruitment agencies are expensive, although some candidates were not awarded this mark, either because they simply mentioned a cost or fee without indicating that it was high, or they linked the high costs to the ‘intervening period’ before taking up a job rather than to the cost of using the recruitment agency itself. Many candidates were able to identify that it was possible to apply independently or use an online guide, and that there is no job guarantee, or the job depends on a good interview anyway.

Where marks were lost, it was usually because the candidate did not offer 3 clearly differentiated points, or because they became distracted by the problems of booking flights and having to live in a country before taking up the job which lacked relevance to the question. Some ignored the more obvious ideas instead suggesting that inviting an interviewer into your home was risky and unsafe, but this moved too far from the text and was therefore not creditable. There were far fewer examples of candidates copying out the paragraph completely in this session although there was still some lifting of phrases such as ‘hefty fee’ or ‘most of this you can do yourself’ which could easily have been expressed in own words.

**(f) According to Text B, what are the advantages and disadvantages of taking a seasonal job?**

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

**Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

This question was based on **Text B** and required candidates to select relevant ideas from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some relevant ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of taking a seasonal job. The most effective responses were carefully planned, organised and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of advantages and disadvantages, reordering the material where necessary to aid fluency and achieve logical progression. These responses avoided repetition and re-modelled the wording of the text to use own words successfully. These responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response.

Responses in the middle range tended to include a more limited range of advantages and disadvantages, the most common being the range of jobs in each season, the fact that no experience or talent is needed, or that they provide some cash. This was then counterbalanced with the fact that the pay is low, that they have a tough schedule and may impinge on time spent with family or on other commitments, and the lack of training received. A number of candidates did not spot similar ideas such as gaining relevant experience and learning on the job, or repeated the idea of low pay because it is mentioned twice in the text. There was often inclusion of excess material even where a good range of ideas had been considered, particularly listing the different types of seasonal jobs available, or the different types of commitments they may interfere with. Some candidates missed the sense that a seasonal job may add to feelings of exhaustion, instead vaguely alluding to fatigue or tiredness caused by the long hours. Candidates at this level of performance often missed the more subtle reading points - for example, that a seasonal may not look impressive on a resumé, instead suggesting including one on a resumé as an advantage.

Some less effective responses closely paraphrased the whole text resulting in repetition as outlined above but also the inclusion of irrelevant details, most commonly wanting to work as a retail manager so getting experience by becoming a cashier for two months, or choosing a job where you have rudimentary knowledge of it already, or offering examples of things that could be bought with the extra cash earned.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response, with some responses being too short due to a small number of relevant ideas identified, and others very long and wordy due to unnecessary information and comments or quotations to exemplify comments. The most effective responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. Less effective responses were either very brief due to a limited number of ideas being considered or were excessively long and unselective. Occasionally less effective responses adhered to the advised word count but took far too long to consider a few ideas by including unnecessary details and/or comments. In most responses there was an attempt to use own words although a surprisingly large number of candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the



text. The most commonly lifted sections of text/phrases were, 'you could work with kids at summer camps or help out at a local festival', 'There are seasonal jobs to fit every season', 'don't require much previous knowledge and suit any talent level', 'If you're looking for a little extra spending cash to save up for a trip', 'tend to be low paying', 'whether the extra hours make sense', 'tourist-based jobs tend to be heaviest on evenings and weekends', 'you can expect to get a quick how-to-speech at best', 'have to learn on the job', and 'hurry: those seasonal jobs won't last long'. Many responses strung together these lifted phrases, so did end up including a range of ideas but their responses were only partially effective due to the reliance on the wording of the text affecting the quality of their response and evidence of understanding. These responses often lacked a helpful structure and moved from advantages to disadvantages then back to advantages without organising the ideas effectively. There was little evidence of misreading in this task, but a bigger issue in the least effective responses was also a tendency to include too much introductory and irrelevant detail as well as too much lifting. Occasionally candidates wholly or partially used information from Text A to address **question 1(f)** which could not be credited.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1(f)

- re-read Text B after reading the question to identify potentially relevant ideas
- plan the response using brief notes to ensure a wide range of ideas from the text is selected
- avoid including unnecessary details which do not address the question
- organise the ideas, grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid repeating ideas
- avoid including a general introduction or summative conclusion
- use your plan rather than the text as you write your answer to avoid lifting
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently using your own words – avoid lifting phrases
- do not quote from the text
- do not add comments or your own views – use a neutral writing style
- try to keep to the guidance to 'write no more than 120 words'.

#### Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- The writer felt that the training presentation had been designed to emphasise that the least attractive job on the resort was being a liftie.**
- As well as guests staying in hotel accommodation, there were great numbers of hikers passing through the resort who needed somewhere to stay.**
- The writer struggled to walk, almost falling, as he arrived back at his accommodation.**
- Boss expressed himself in a tone of gloating satisfaction.**

The most effective answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on the underlined word or phrase, located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. A few responses copied the whole sentence from the question inserting the correct phrase from the text to replace the underlined phrase in the question, but this does waste valuable time for the candidates. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase / sentence could not be rewarded, as candidates do need to exercise precision to demonstrate full understanding. Most candidates were familiar with the demands of this question, but a few seemed confused about how to respond, offering own words equivalents of the underlined words instead of locating them in the text. Where marks were lost, it was usually due to partially explaining the underlined phrase, for example 'hordes', or more commonly including too much of the text and therefore moving beyond explaining just the underlined phrase, for example 'presumably to underline the fact that' or 'I staggered, still soaked to the skin' or "That was nothing!" crowed Boss'.

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**
- (i) **overlooked**
  - (ii) **crewing**
  - (iii) **avoided**

In **Question 2(b)** the most effective answers considered the meaning of each word considering its context as used in the text. For example, the word ‘crewing’ refers to working or operating rather than simply ‘riding’. Many candidates were able to explain ‘overlooked’ as ‘ignoring’ or ‘pretending not to notice’, but some went further than the meaning in context required instead inferring that the boss didn’t care, which could not be credited. ‘Avoided’ was usually successfully explained also, however, several candidates didn’t focus on the idea of the skiers taking action to stay away but instead explained it as a restricted or banned area which moved too far away from the word being explained. The best answers to question 2b thought carefully about meanings in context and offered viable answers which would accurately replace the words in the text without altering the meaning.

- (c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests other boats might be better suited to the planned journey.**

**Use your own words in your explanation.**

**Our Lift Supervisor (‘Boss’) marched us around every lift in the ski-field. ‘So now you know the lifts,’ he informed us. ‘See you all bright and early tomorrow!’**

**And that was it: training was over! I’d never pushed a button, had only the flimsiest concept how a ski lift even worked, much less how to fix one if something went wrong, didn’t know how to test the equipment, use the radio in case of emergency or assist guests on and off the lift. Ski lifts spin all day, every hour transporting skiers and riders of all ability levels up the mountain. I didn’t know how many things I didn’t know about my new job – but suspected there were plenty.**

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested the writer’s opinion of the training provided. A significant number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no focus on the writer’s language and no language choice selected. Where a paraphrased version of a language choice was offered, it was occasionally possible to credit an explanation if they lifted a word such as ‘marched’, but they often lacked any focus on any specific words used by the writer and therefore could not be credited at all. The most effective responses offered a concise quotation then considered how the writer was able to convey the writer’s opinion of the training through the language used. The most popular example was ‘That was it: training was over!’ and many responses explored the writer’s shock that the training was so short and lacking substance, inferring that he felt completely unprepared and ill-equipped to do his job as a result. The best responses also tackled ‘flimsiest concept of how a ski lift even worked’ as suggesting that he felt that his grasp of the essential facts and processes had no substance at all therefore inferring that he felt anxious and convinced that he would not be able to perform the duties of the role. Many also sensed his frustration with the boss through these choices. Many candidates selected ‘I’d never pushed a button’ citing the lack of practical experience offered by the training meaning that even the simplest tasks weren’t covered therefore inferring that any emergency situations would be impossible to deal with on the basis of such superficial guidance. Some candidates chose to explain the long list of things not covered in the training as a single choice. Some of them were able to gain all 3 marks by exploring how such a long list and the range of insecurities demonstrated his feelings of being completely under-prepared, overwhelmed and terrified of his new role. However, some of these answers found it challenging to move beyond repeating that there was a long list of things he could not do without exploring the connotations any further. Some less effective responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples. Only one example could be rewarded so offering more was a waste of valuable examination time that could have been spent on **Question 2(d)** where more developed responses are expected. Several responses simply paraphrased the whole paragraph without selecting a language choice at all. A small number of candidates misread this paragraph and assumed that he was completely exhausted after the

grueling nature of the training, relieved it was all over so he could finally rest – the most common choice that this misinterpretation stemmed from was ‘That was it: training was over!’.

**(d) Re-read paragraphs 6 and 8.**

- **Paragraph 6 begins ‘Next morning ...’ and is about the process of getting up and down the mountain each day.**
- **Paragraph 8 begins ‘One Wednesday ...’ and describes the consequences of bad weather on the mountain.**

**Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.**

The most effective responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three appropriate language choices from each of the two paragraphs indicated in the question. The most effective approach was to consider the meanings of carefully chosen phrases in the context of the text and then consider connotations, effects and impacts created by the writer’s language choices. These responses often offered a clear overview of the writer’s intentions in each paragraph. Less effective responses were sometimes written in note form and offered less developed analysis or repeated the same ideas about effects, often making rather generalised assertions rather than considering specific words more closely. Middle range responses were usually effective when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects fully, and the least effective responses tended to offer quotations (sometimes rather unselectively) but struggled to find anything relevant to say about them. Several candidates chose three language choices in total rather than three from each paragraph as clearly stated in the question/ leading to some underdeveloped responses, although this was less frequent than in previous examination sessions. Some candidates chose inappropriate language choices – sometimes plain language offering limited opportunities.

The most effective responses selected phrases but also considered the individual words within them suggesting how they worked within the context of the whole language choice. Rather than identifying literary devices they engaged fully with the language, considering its impact and connotations fully and linking each choice to a coherent and developed consideration of the paragraph. In paragraph 6 many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of the hugely challenging weather conditions and generally hard nature of the job. They considered the preparation of the writer and other ‘lifties’ through ‘assembled’ and ‘armed ourselves for combat’ as evidence of their military approach to the job as though facing a huge and difficult battle for which they had to equip themselves appropriately. These responses could then build upon this through analysing the effects of the writer describing the lift chairs as ‘opponents’ as though they are an enemy to be faced and conquered each morning.

Some responses focused more on the descriptions of the lift chairs as ‘fantastic frozen sculptures’ citing the awe of the writer at nature’s artistry but also the implications of the lift chairs being frozen solidly like statues and therefore immovable. This was often chosen alongside choices such as ‘relentless weather’ or ‘a series of ice monoliths’ to offer analysis that focused on the merciless nature of the cold and how it completely changed the ‘humble steel and wooden frames’ into huge, daunting blocks of ice that made the ‘lifties’ seem tiny and insignificant in comparison to the huge job of clearing them ready for the day ahead. They could successfully develop the idea of nature as an artist through choices such as ‘layered and carved by snow and wind into intricate abstract shapes’ and ‘breathtakingly beautiful’ which many candidates used to focus on the extraordinary designs that looked deliberately created linking it to the power of nature and the stunning sights created each morning. These choices could all be linked successfully yet considered independently offering candidates a great deal of scope for precise and developed analysis of the language used in paragraph 6.

In paragraph 8 many responses were able to appreciate the graphic and dramatic descriptions of the effects of the increasingly powerful storm up the mountain. Many candidates opted to discuss ‘the wind was raging, buffeting chairs and customers alike’ citing the connotations of anger and fury portraying the wind as a destructive and violent force. Another popular choice was the [the bus] ‘crawled out of the car park’ with some good analysis of the struggling bus as a huge heavy machine being beaten by natural forces. This was often linked to ‘attempted the descent’ as implying the utter hopelessness of the situation and many went on to suggest that the ‘gusts of

wind, revealing and concealing the narrow road ahead' implies that the weather is toying with the humans, deliberately offering hope then cruelly removing it. Many responses also cited the increasing helplessness in this paragraph resulting in the 'drifts of snow had blocked it completely' signalling that all hope is lost and indicating their complete helplessness when faced with the devastating forces of nature.

Where effects were less successfully explained, it tended to be due to repeating the same idea for all three language choices in the paragraph. In paragraph 6 this tended to be through repeating the idea of the preparing for war through all choices selected without looking at them individually to consider the nuances, and in paragraph 8 it tended to be repeating the idea of the weather being powerful and extreme. There were also candidates who used the language of the text repeatedly in their explanations: most commonly 'armed', 'combat', 'breathtaking', 'beautiful', 'sculptures', 'layered and carved', 'drizzle', 'crawled', 'stuck', and 'blocked'.

There was little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some candidates thought that 'ice-monoliths' were ancient snow creatures, and some interpreted 'slushy' too literally as a drink. Some candidates interpreted 'buffeting' incorrectly and thought the wind was blowing tables covered with food around while people were trying to help themselves to it. Some less effective responses also included very long quotations with general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. Very rarely no quotations were included at all with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead. Such responses did not address the question at all. In a small number of responses, the wrong paragraphs were used so no choices could be credited: candidates are advised to look at the section of text supplied in the question as well as the paragraph number to ensure that they select language choices from the correct paragraphs. They should also be aware of where paragraphs end, especially where there is a page break.

Candidates are reminded that it is the quality of their language analysis which can be credited. Listing of literary devices or the selection of plain language from the text is unlikely to lead to an effective response. Examples of plainer language such as 'Next morning' or 'Our driver radioed in' are unlikely to offer suitable opportunities for discussion in this question therefore candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- select three precise and accurate language choices from *both* specified paragraphs
- make sure explanations of meanings make sense within the context of the text – avoid literal meanings unless this is the case
- avoid very general explanations such as 'this helps the reader imagine it', 'this creates a strong visual image for the reader' or 'this is an example of powerful language and imagery'
- try to engage with the language at word level by considering meaning in context then connotations / associations of words and why the writer has selected them
- start with the contextualised meaning, then move on to the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps the reader's understanding of the situation, characters, atmosphere etc.
- avoid repeating the same explanations of effects for each language choice: try to be more specific about analysing at word-level.

### Question 3

You are a journalist writing an article about the job of a ski-lift attendant (liffie) as part of a series on interesting seasonal jobs for young people.

In your article you should:

- explain what attracts visitors to Wanaka and why
- describe what being a liffie involves and what might appeal to young people about this job
- suggest what someone might find challenging about working as a liffie and useful advice for any young person considering applying for any job at this resort.

This question required candidates to write an article about the job of a ski-lift attendant as part of a series on interesting seasonal jobs for young people. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their article. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and adapt it to fit the requirements of an article aimed at young people focusing on describing the attractions of Wanaka as a resort and outlining the job of a 'liffie' considering what might appeal to young people. The third bullet required candidates to infer what challenges the job might pose and outline any useful advice for those intending to apply.

Most candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas in the text to support the response. Many of the responses were also able to develop the ideas by writing in a credible style for an article, evaluating the ideas in the text and adapting them accordingly. Where candidates had followed the bullets carefully, they were often able to develop explicit and implicit ideas effectively to write a lively and informative article about the job of a liffie in Wanaka. Most candidates addressed the bullet points in chronological order using them to structure the response coherently. Less effective responses tended to be unselective or closely paraphrase the text without adapting the style therefore offering a rather plain narrative account with little sense of the young readers. The least effective responses used the ideas in the text thinly, often offering very general ideas about Wanaka's attractions in response to the first bullet, listing some aspects of the liffie's role in response to the second bullet, and offering an undeveloped response to the third bullet mostly citing the cold weather without offering any further details or trying to develop the ideas in any way. Some less effective responses only addressed one or two of the bullets.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to explain what attracts visitors to Wanaka. This gave candidates opportunities to look at the range of different people visiting the resort and outline what attractions it offers them. The best responses considered the wide range of people attracted, including both wealthy, fashionable guests looking for luxurious facilities such as hotels, private chefs and personal ski instructors, as well as backpackers looking for much cheaper accommodation. Clearly attractions such as the guaranteed snow and the 'Giant ski slope' would be universal ones. These responses recognised that in response to this bullet point they were focusing on the resort of Wanaka and its general appeal rather than simply focusing on why a young person looking for seasonal work would like it there. Less effective response found a narrow range of ideas in this bullet mostly focusing on the snow and skiing – many used information from Text A about snow quality and the best snow for practising new techniques. This tended to make the response lose focus on the relevant ideas in Text C and often resulted in thin use of the text. There was little evidence of misreading in response to the first bullet, but some responses thought that the fact that private chefs and ski instructors 'lodged free on-site' meant that their services were also free to customers in the resort.

The second bullet offered many opportunities to identify the duties and responsibilities of a 'liffie' and what young people might find appealing about the role. The best responses selected carefully and were able to remodel the material developing the ideas. The best responses selected the appropriate details from the text about operating, maintaining and fixing the ski lift, working with a partner, as well as dealing with emergencies. They were also able to outline the more adventurous and light-hearted perks of the job, such as using opportunities to ski or snowboard while working, as well as enjoying the amazing sight of the frozen lift chairs in the early morning. These responses supported the ideas with details from the text such as the early mornings, working at a designated station, the use of a radio, helping guests board and leave the lifts etc. Some less effective responses simply lifted all the details of working on a ski lift, sometimes closely paraphrasing or even copying from one paragraph in the text without modifying the material to suit the demands of the question or to link it clearly to what a young person may find appealing about it. Less effective responses often ignored everything about operating and managing a ski lift and struggled to find



material to address the second bullet, sometimes only copying the sentences about doing ‘quick-laps’ without clear understanding.

When responding to the third bullet, the most effective responses clearly organised the material into the challenges faced by ‘liffies’ and any relevant advice, usually linking both these aspects neatly together. These responses picked out a range of clues from throughout the text to develop appropriate ideas, citing not only the harsh and unpredictable weather, but also the poor quality of the training and inadequate guidance from the ‘boss’, the unfamiliar jargon used in the role, the fight to get accommodation as an outdoor worker, and the sense that the indoor jobs may be more attractive and worth considering instead. Advice tended to centre around considering whether the extreme cold may be too much for some – with pertinent reminders about bringing layers of warm clothing - or whether the lack of training may lead to a lack of confidence in pursuing the role and therefore indoor jobs may be more attractive. Less effective responses tended to lack range in response to this bullet often simply lifting the fact that there are ‘sub-zero temperatures’, or training being a simple ‘slideshow’. Most responses missed the more subtle challenges such as the competition for cheap accommodation, or not understanding the specialist terms such as ‘the base’ completely. As a result there were some thin responses to this bullet. Some responses took the advice offered in response to the third bullet from the other texts in the reading insert, focusing on the need to get applications in during certain months depending on the hemisphere, or the opportunity to save up cash, or applying for a visa depending on length of stay. Candidates should be reminded that even where there is a common theme across different texts, in Question 3 they are being assessed on their reading understanding of Text C only so should focus on using only ideas from the correct text. Using ideas from other texts leads to a loss of reading focus.

Many candidates seemed comfortable and familiar with the format of an article aimed at young readers with the best responses adopting an appropriately lively and enthusiastic tone and register. Middle-range responses tended to be written as a rather plain narrative relying heavily on the sequencing of the original text and sometimes written by Tony himself. The language used was mostly appropriate and some more effective responses were genuinely informative and effective. In less effective responses the language and voice were very plain but rarely inappropriate for the genre, although such pieces tended to lack a sense of purpose or audience. Generally, accuracy was good with some skilfully written responses. Others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression caused by errors in grammar and punctuation. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct errors where possible. There were few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage, but some less effective responses were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences throughout the response.

### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read Text C carefully, more than once, to ensure sound understanding
- do not refer to ideas in Texts B and C
- pay careful attention to the written style adopted – for example, the register required for the purpose and audience of the task
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- give equal attention to all three bullet points
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- remember to look for ideas throughout the text for the third bullet
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible
- remember to use ideas and details from the text but to adapt and develop them appropriately to create a convincing voice and new perspective
- leave some time to check through your response
- do not expend time counting the words: the suggested word length is a guide, not a limit.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

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Paper 0990/21  
Directed Writing and Composition 21

## Key messages

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

To achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- understand how different audiences, purposes and genres should influence the style adopted
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task.

## General comments

Most examiners were familiar with the format of the examination paper and understood what was required for both the directed writing and composition questions. There were few very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed although Examiners noticed more of these than in recent years. Nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, with very few rubric infringements seen. A small number of candidates did not attempt **Question 1** but wrote quite competent responses to one of the composition questions. Most responses were written in candidates' own words although there were a few responses which were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert. Some lifting of phrases or sentences was common but where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing. In **Section B**, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were stories submitted for the descriptive writing tasks which made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure. This was more common in **Question 3**.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of over-tourism in the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for an article though fewer were clearly addressed to a specific audience of young people. The register required here was generally well understood, with frequent use of organisational techniques suitable for an article and many also showed an awareness of the kind of rhetoric commonly used in such texts. Most candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion was often given about how young people should decide on a holiday destination, based on ideas in the texts, with only a minority simply reporting the facts and ideas in the texts with no comment on them. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts, though not always probing or offering judgements about them. In many cases, responses reflected the ideas in the texts in a way which did not take adequate account of the point of view of local people in tourist destinations, seeing the task solely from the tourist's point of view and missing the salient idea in the texts. More effective evaluation tended to challenge some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them and to suggest an understanding of the need for the interests of the tourists, the local population and the environment to be better balanced.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. Some salient ideas in the texts were not quite addressed, often how over-tourism affected the lives of local people in more important ways than crowding the pavements and adding to traffic

congestion. There was some assertion rather than argument, often where candidates simply denied that over-tourism may impoverish local people as well as enrich them economically.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. The balance of rights between tourists and residents was often well understood, with some thoughtful comments about the risk of over-tourism destroying the very features which made a place attractive to tourists. Less effective responses sometimes gave a summary of the ideas in the texts but without the focus of considering how young people may contribute to or alleviate the problem of over-tourism. There was, however, sometimes a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of young people. The structure and organisation of ideas required in an article, such as a catchy opening or provocative headings, were well understood by many candidates though there were also many responses which were quite flat and discursive in style.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were effective, organised and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of shops remembered from childhood, from bookshops, sweet shops or shops which evoked strong feelings in the narrator for different reasons. Less effective responses to this question tended to become more narrative or the shops described were rather ordinary and experiences more prosaic. For the second question, a wide range of descriptions of animals of different kinds was submitted with the most effective often focusing on the effects of the encounter on the narrator. Less effective responses here included overlong narrative preambles with less focus on descriptive detail and in some cases it was not clear which animal was being described.

Both narrative writing questions proved popular across the range of abilities. The required phrase in **Question 4** was used in a variety of ways, often to help structure a story in which the narrator was 'convinced' of something which was later shown to be untrue, such as which direction to take on a road or path, how to solve a problem or who to trust in a particular situation. Narratives which were constructed around the use of the phrase and which included credible characters and scenarios were generally more effective than those which used the phrase more co-incidentally in the story. **Question 5** elicited some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives. The significance of the silk ribbon to the narrator was often key to the unfolding narrative and these ranged widely from silk ribbons which had been given by ageing grandparents or passed down through generations to ribbons with magical properties and ribbons which held together packages with important gifts inside. In some stories, the silk ribbon became a cohesive device or motif which helped to tell the story in less obvious ways than usual.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

**Write an article for young people, advising them what they need to consider when deciding on a holiday destination.**

**In your article you should:**

- **evaluate the ideas, opinions and attitudes in both texts**
- **suggest what young people should consider in order to make a responsible decision.**

**Base your article on what you have read in both texts, but be careful to use your own words. Address both of the bullet points.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the speech was also accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved the extent to which the needs of tourists and local residents could be reconciled and which should take precedence when young people choose a holiday destination. More complex ideas such as the point made in Text A that the effects of over-tourism can create conflict between the two groups needed some probing and interpretation for the higher marks, beyond a comment that young people should avoid areas where locals feel hostility towards tourists. Similarly, Paolo Santini's comment about the kinds of shops prevalent in tourist areas was sometimes thoughtfully inferred to suggest that the needs of residents were unfairly neglected in favour of tourists by businesses and authorities in tourist hotspots. Some contradiction was sometimes discerned in the idea that tourism was a lucrative source of income for economies but that over-dependence on it eventually destroyed the experience of both residents and tourists.

In less effective responses, it was sometimes asserted that tourists were not to blame for the rising cost of living in tourist hotspots or for environmental damage, ideas which tended to contradict but not evaluate the implications of over-tourism outlined in the texts. While many candidates argued that young people should choose less popular areas or should travel in off-peak times of year, more evaluative responses linked these suggestions to more sustainable forms of tourism rather than suggesting that tourists would simply have a better holiday experience.

In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, Examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts. For example, some concluded that, since not all regions suffered from over-tourism, careful research was needed to select regions which would benefit from tourist spending and companies which channelled income towards local people rather than the big corporations which, as one candidate wrote, 'probably exploited the local people and their way of life much more than the tourists themselves.'

### **Marks for reading**

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about how the conflicting interests involved in over-tourism could be reconciled by young people making their choice of holiday destination.

Most responses included reference to the environmental damage made by over-tourism in some countries such as Thailand and Iceland and to some of the examples of ways in which authorities are attempting to

mitigate its worst effects. More thoughtful responses considered carefully the more subtle effects of the commercialisation of culture and nature by those who promoted tourism. Some considered that over-tourism was a matter of degree - *'when to put the brakes on,'* as suggested by Paolo Santini - while others commented on the economic structures which led greedy, exploitative organisations to exploit places and people. Some scepticism was shown, for example, using the description of tourist behaviour in Text B, about whether most tourists were genuinely interested in the culture of tourist hotspots. As one candidate put it, *'They trudge through museums with little enthusiasm but pack the many cafes and restaurants which have robbed locals of their basic amenities and resources.'* Similarly, in some thoughtful responses, there was some probing of the idea of cultural authenticity since festivals and traditions had been so exploited by the tourist industry that such customs were no longer carried on as an expression of local identity but to make money from tourists.

A common approach in Level 5 and low Level 6 responses was that over-tourism was unavoidable in some places but that its harmful effects could be ameliorated by young people changing their behaviour in ways which were implied in the texts, such as avoiding social media trending hotspots. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically offered some sensible ideas but did not develop them to include the interests of local residents as well as a young person's desire to enjoy their holiday.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused more exclusively on the tourist's point of view: how young people should decide their destination based on their personal preferences rather than following a celebrity's views. More general, if valid, ideas were also typical at this level with many responses including exhortations to be respectful of the people and places visited or to take care not to leave litter or remove sand from beautiful areas.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was some coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but where these were listed or simply recorded. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. There was also sometimes, at this level, misunderstanding of some details in the texts or an imbalanced grasp of ideas. The whole country of Thailand was sometimes said to have been closed to tourists or Paolo Santini was seen as person who had only benefited from tourism and was grateful for this. Iceland was also seen as exclusively a beneficiary of tourism, missing the limitations mentioned in Text A. In some responses, the idea of 'over-tourism' was not really understood and the term was used synonymously with 'tourism'.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer roots in the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

### **Marks for Writing**

25 marks were available for style and register, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Style and audience**

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for an article for an audience of young people, whose specific interests and point of view could be understood. Most responses showed a clear understanding of this required register, even where technical writing skills were weak, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, some attempted to engage the attention of their peers with some sense of shared values and interests, assuming some shared ground with the audience in wanting to enjoy the freedom and self-determination of a holiday without parents. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in an engaging way but making their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, responses were pitched at the level of a mature, environmentally responsible and socially aware young audience. Where a less nuanced, perhaps more clichéd approach was taken and an assumption made that young people wanted to have fun and were less interested than older people in culture or natural beauty, responses could be limited and less use made of the reading material.



In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage the audience with a sometimes-provocative style often worked well. Conversely, some responses were generally accurate but were largely summaries of the reading material rather than adopting the style for articles or the register appropriate for the audience. Sometimes, in reaching for a less formal register appropriate for the audience, overly colloquial expressions such as 'gonna' or overly loose sentence structures more redolent of speech patterns were used which were not appropriate for an article.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent style. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward, though these kinds of responses were quite rare. More commonly, phrases and sentences were lifted and in some cases increasingly so as the response developed.

### Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged were clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a cohesive piece. The opening and concluding sections of the most effective responses tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the repetition of similar ideas which appeared in both. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more dependent on the sequencing of the original texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas. While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for.

### Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a Writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only engaging in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader.

Some complex sentence structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation within sentences.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually plain, the language used was generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical disagreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this range included 'environment', 'tourism' and other words used in the texts such as 'fragile' or words were incorrectly pluralised such as 'citys'.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was quite common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more

substantially could not be given marks in Level 4 for Writing or for Reading because both the content and the style of the response was not the candidate's own.

**Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:**

- be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts
- look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out
- group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

## Section B

### Descriptive writing

**Question 2 – Describe a shop you remember visiting in the past.**

**Question 3 – Describe the experience of seeing an animal.**

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions were interpreted in a wide variety of ways which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of different kinds of shops. These were both pleasant and unpleasant establishments and where candidates made use of the implied sense of nostalgic memory in the task, responses were often imbued with significance from childhood. The second question elicited a range of scenarios and animals, including both domestic cats and dogs and glimpses of wild animals in jungles and forests. Many effective responses were able to evoke the reactions of the narrator vividly, usually an awareness of the power or beauty of the animal and gave a sense of privilege in witnessing it.

Responses, as is always the case, were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. In both questions, some responses lacked real clarity so the shop sometimes sold an unlikely or unidentifiable assortment of items or, in other cases, the shop itself was quite ordinary and offered a limited range of striking details to engage the reader. Lower in the mark range, responses to the second question were rather prone to narrative though Examiners rewarded description wherever such details appeared. In the first question, many responses had detailed preambles about stormy weather which jarred a little with the focus of the task and added little to the overall cohesion of the piece.

Some effective responses to the first question often described bookshops or sweetshops which were remembered from childhood. These included a level of detailed observation that gave the description credibility and interest rather than relying on cliché and often incorporated memories from the past which gave the response an emotional impact. One response recorded meeting a sweetshop owner, now much older and more frail, but recalled with convincing affection: *'Her hair was grey, tied clumsily in a collapsing bun of unruly wisps of curls, but the sparkle in her eyes when she recognized me took me right back to my 8 year old self with her, surrounded by the tall jars of promises and surprises behind her at the counter.'* In another response, the experience of being entranced and absorbed by the children's books on a visit to spend birthday money as a child included the smells of fresh pages and the sensation of discovering shelves of colourful picture books and stories. Some candidates interpreted the task by describing a now neglected or derelict shop which evoked memories of its former glory and this approach often offered interesting contrasting details from the past and present.

In the second descriptive writing question, more effective responses were often clearly focused on the moment when the animal was first seen and the impact of this experience on the narrator. While there were many tigers in forests, some of these were effective in the way the animal was revealed to the narrator. One response included a brief preamble describing a path through a lush forest which effectively set the scene: *'I heard nothing but the deep silence of the forest at dusk. I saw nothing but the trunks of tall, slim trees, their branches creating a lattice of shadows at my feet. But I knew it was out there in the dark, aware of my presence.'* In another response, the point of view was that of a child given a puppy as a gift and seeing the animal for the first time: *'His tiny, curious eyes searched for mine, trusting and vulnerable, and the world was never the same again.'* A sense of awe and wonder, a difficult emotion to describe, was sometimes skilfully evoked by the sight of the animal: *'The beautiful doe lifted its head slowly, catching my gaze for a split second, stopping the sound of the rain in my ears, the tiredness in my legs and the whole spinning world around me.'*

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created convincing, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure, often provided by the narrator's reactions or a specific atmosphere, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually a more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less

striking images and more stereotypical ideas. In the first question, some responses were exaggerated with some very grubby, unsavoury details which lacked credibility for a shop. Some described rather prosaic scenes of shopping in supermarkets. In the second question, the animal described was sometimes not clearly identified or the response consisted of a visit to a zoo which various animals observed rather than a clear descriptive focus on one.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, especially in the second question. The animals encountered were often part of a visit to a zoo but the focus was often on extraneous details about the journey there or were simple chronological accounts of where the family went.

Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although some were accurately written. These were sometimes entirely narrative or the animal described was very unclear and responses muddled and often brief.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed a confident ability to use both simple and complex language, striking images and personification, as well as a range of sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide-ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity. Obscure, sometimes archaic language sometimes revealed a lack of understanding of its meaning rather than a wide range of vocabulary.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included disagreement, especially between pronouns and verbs, and the omission of definite and indefinite articles was also common and damaging to otherwise quite accurate, if simple, style.

#### **Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content
- choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a specific atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used imprecisely do not help your style.

## **Narrative writing**

**Question 4 – Write a story which includes the words, ‘... I was convinced I was right ...’.**

**Question 5 – Write a story with the title, ‘The silk ribbon’.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations or were pre-prepared. Although less prevalent than in the recent past, in some cases this lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension, mystery or drama and to vary the pace of the story were essential elements of more effective responses to both questions.

In **Question 4**, better responses often incorporated into the narrative the idea of the narrator’s self-assurance, as implied by the phrase in the question, and the story unfolded around this idea. One narrative, for example, involved the narrator being convinced that his close friends were plotting behind his back to harm his chances of winning an academic prize which was very important to him when in fact they already knew he had won and were planning a surprise celebration. The interest here was created by the humour of the narrator’s mounting paranoia: *‘That snake in the grass, so-called friend Peter! Pretending to be my friend all these years since nursery, just to stab me in the back now!’* The denouement was effective and entertaining because of this characterisation of the narrator through their thoughts and feelings. This use of characterisation was often important in creating other credible narratives in which relationships between friends or other characters were explored, using the quotation in the question to reveal some significant flaw or failure in the narrator’s perceptions. There was some subtlety in creating characters in the higher mark range. In one response, the narrator was convinced that an impressive new neighbour was engaged in some nefarious activity: *‘The sleek, black sedan pulled up almost silently and from my bedroom window I watched a slim, dainty ankle emerge from the car door held open by a burly man in sunglasses. The vision that followed the pretty ankle was mesmerising. Her jet black hair cascaded down her shoulders, tumbling over the strap of a shimmering silk dress like water. She looked up and smiled at me with a cheery wave and my heart stopped.’*

Most narratives addressing this question were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping although some candidates chose more ambitious structures, telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight. While such structures were more difficult to control, Examiners could often reward these approaches for their ambition and engagement.

More commonly in the middle range, narratives were straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. Plotlines involving robberies or trips with friends to various locations or getting lost in forests or cities were often organised and somewhat cohesive but did not really engage the reader.

Examiners saw fewer pre-planned and not entirely relevant narratives in this series and only a few where candidates forgot to include the required phrase or where it seemed immaterial to the plot.

For **Question 5**, there were many different plotlines, characters and events which allowed candidates to show their narrative writing ability. In many at all levels, the silk ribbon in the title was an object which was very significant to the protagonist in the story or whose significance emerged as the narrative progressed. Ribbons worn, sometimes for unknown reasons, by fellow soldiers or ribbons passed down from one generation to another featured often. In some narratives, the fear of having lost the ribbon gave the story a moment of jeopardy while in others it was the finding of the ribbon which gave the narrative its impetus and shape. In one carefully constructed story, for example, the ribbon worn by a mysteriously missing grandmother in a portrait in a grand house was found by a curious granddaughter. While the story was not resolved in a conventional way, there were some clues to interest and engage the reader about what had happened to the grandmother.

Some other narratives also featured ribbons with magical properties, such as in one story where a mother strictly forbade her child from removing the ribbon from his wrist. When, after an accident, doctors wanted to remove it, the mother fled with the child and revealed the powers which the ribbon bestowed on the child.



While some of these were well-managed and created interest in the characters and settings involved, many in the middle range found this genre quite difficult to bring to life convincingly.

Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid attention to characterisation and how events were driven by character traits and choices.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and reasonably credible for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed, relevant story. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying, if not always engaging, resolution. For the first question, this often included the use of the quotation in the question to create some sense of over-confidence which was later vindicated or dashed. For the second narrative question, Level 5 responses often involved a ribbon which was significant to the protagonist for emotional reasons or which created some mystery. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. In the first question, these sometimes involved simple accounts, such as one response in which a husband and wife disagreed about where to go on holiday but after a simple recount of activities undertaken on each day of the trip, the narrator was proved right in their choice. At this level there was a tendency to say simply what happened or to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by characterisation and setting. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. While most less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and, where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary. Speech punctuation was usually problematic at this level although the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Quite common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 marks, such as disagreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the misspelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A common reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed but sometimes sentence separation was missing altogether. Though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing, these weaknesses also limited the marks available in the narrative writing.

#### **Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:**

- think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative
- consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not rely on events

- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes: accurate speech punctuation will help to lift your mark
- use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create effects.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

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Paper 0990/22  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

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

To achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- understand how different audiences, purposes and genres should influence the style adopted
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task.

## General comments

Candidates were familiar with the format of the examination paper and understood what was required for both the directed writing and composition questions. There were few very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. Nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. Very few rubric infringements noted. A small number of candidates did not attempt **Question 1** but wrote competent responses to one of the composition questions. Most responses were written in candidates' own words although there were a few responses which were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert. Some lifting of phrases or sentences was common but where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing. In **Section B**, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were stories submitted for the descriptive writing tasks which made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of apologies and apologising in the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a letter to a friend. The register required here was well understood, with a friendly and informative tone and the use of direct address. Most candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion was often given about how employees should respond to requests from their bosses, based on ideas in the texts, with only a minority simply reporting the views and ideas in the texts with no comment on them. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts, though not always probing or offering judgements about them. In many cases, responses reflected the ideas in the texts in a way which did not take adequate account of the point of view of other colleagues in a workplace and the relationships between them, seeing the task solely from the point of view of the friend who was being asked to apologise for missing a meeting and thus missing the salient ideas in the texts. More effective evaluation tended to challenge some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them and to suggest an understanding of the need for the interests of employers and employees to be better balanced.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. Some salient ideas in the texts were not fully addressed, such as how crucial good workplace relationships were for everyone's benefit; some responses insisted on the right to refuse to apologise for or explain one's actions, even when they impacted negatively on other people. A significant minority of responses based their discussion on an assumed premise not derived from the text, for example that the missed meeting was of no importance, or that it was missed because of some (often lengthily detailed) family emergency. This approach could lead to some useful development of points in the texts but tended to undermine genuine evaluation. Where these possibilities were raised as queries rather than given facts some effective, evaluative discussion often followed. There was some assertion rather than argument, often where candidates simply denied one's superior in the workplace any right to intervene in such matters, or that there was existing bad feeling between the co-workers prior to the arranged meeting which excused missing it.

Most made effective use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. The question of the status of colleagues in the workplace, of the rights of employers and employees and how these might be affected by the situation was often well understood, and the most effective responses selected from, and elaborated upon the material as part of an ongoing meditation on the addressee's situation. Less effective responses were sometimes little more than a summary of the two articles in the Reading Insert. The structure and organisation of ideas required in a letter to a friend, such as a conversational opening and a concerned and supportive conclusion, were well understood by many candidates though there were also responses which were flat and discursive in style after brief initial pleasantries, or overly formal and impersonal.

In Section B, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of effective writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were effective, organised and sustained. Both questions were popular, the first rather more so, and produced responses across the mark range. In responses to the first descriptive option there were some convincing and evocative descriptions of rooms before and after renovation, the more effective ones conveying some sense of the occupant, past or present, and the feelings experienced when the renovation was revealed. Less effective responses were inventory-like, prosaic or very simply structured. The second question produced a substantial number of high-level responses which were dramatically evocative and often very successfully structured. There were also responses with overlong or narrative preambles before the appearance of the performer, but the most effective examples were memorably effective, often detailing the emotional effect of the performance on the observer.

Both narrative writing questions proved popular across the range of abilities. The required phrase in **Question 4** was used in a variety of ways, often to help structure a story where the bizarre or unexpected erupted into the banality of everyday life. Narratives which were constructed around the use of the phrase and which included credible characters and scenarios were generally more effective than those which used the phrase more co-incidentally in the story. **Question 5** allowed for a very wide range of scenarios, eliciting some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives in various genres: time-travel, romance and family saga, or first-person accounts conveying the horrors of the examination hall. Some highly effective responses created tension and pace, supporting the narrative detail with the deliberate manipulation of paragraph and sentence length for effect.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

**Your friend has been asked by their boss at work to apologise to a colleague for missing a meeting. Your friend is unsure whether to apologise and how to apologise so that their boss is satisfied.**

**Write a letter to your friend, giving advice on what they should do.**

**In your letter you should:**

- **evaluate the ideas about apologising given in both texts**
- **explain why your friend should or should not apologise, and how to deal with the situation at work.**

**Base your letter on what you have read in both texts, but be careful to use your own words. Address both of the bullet points.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the letter was also accurate and precise in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement.

### **Marks for reading**

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether the conflicting interests and attitudes of the colleagues and their boss could be reconciled by appropriate apology.

Most responses included reference to the missed meeting and the boss's subsequent requirement of an apology, although some only discussed the merits or otherwise of apologising in vague terms or spent so much time on the invented relationship between the writer and the addressee that coverage of the material was limited. There was often more dependence on giving advice than on evaluation of the ideas, and time was often wasted on lengthy and often unrealistic suggestions for physical ways of making amends such as expensive lunches and gifts. The most effective responses awarded marks in upper Level 5 or in Level 6 never neglected the fact of the workplace context, and the origin of the request for apology – in short, they took careful notice of the wording of the task. At this level also were seen challenges to some of the assumptions in the texts – the moral compromises of pragmatism, or the need for personal integrity versus appeasement.

While most responses across all levels of achievement employed the material in Text A more than that of Text B, some used Text A's formative anecdote about the cynicism of business firms' apologies to their own evaluative purposes: *'The boss will obviously be familiar with these practices and has probably written some of them himself! He'll see right through any attempt at a seemingly humble apology made only for personal gain.'* This clearly reflects salient elements of the task as well as the material. Other thoughtful responses set the tone for effective evaluation early on: *'You should calm down and reflect upon why an apology is required. Why do you think the boss is involving himself like this?'* While most responses reproduced and sometimes discussed the assertion in Text B that apologising was seen in the workplace as the *'ultimate weakness'*, perceptive writers could create an evaluative synthesis with other material: *'... but refusing to apologise for a blatant transgression could make you seem unpleasant and arrogant. You're a person, not a corporation and have no need to protect your brand or win customer loyalty.'* Another response awarded



marks in Level 6 asked, *'What good will your elevated self-esteem do for your career if you are disliked and shunned in the office?'* The majority of Level 5 responses demonstrated the thoroughness and 'some successful evaluation of both explicit and implicit ideas' required for Level 5: here both sides of the argument about apologising were considered with some range of evaluation and clear and relevant recommendations given. Where the advisability of 'making amends' was discussed evaluation emerged when actions such as studying the minutes of the missed meeting, or ameliorating the consequences of their absence on its outcome in some way to restore the boss's confidence were suggested. At Level 5, and in upper Level 4, most candidates felt an apology was appropriate but were keen that the individual was not consequently exploited or seen as weak. This opinion could develop evaluatively when consideration of the need for self-confidence in the corporate environment was discussed. Most responses at all levels picked up the point about over-apologising being a negative force, although one pragmatist pointed out, *'Look friend, as we apologise ten times a day over nothing and everything, it's surely no big deal to apologise for this. Just do it!'*

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused more exclusively on the feelings of the people involved and a general discussion of differing means of apology. Where even a single evaluative point was firmly made, marks at the bottom of Level 5 could be awarded if there was otherwise reasonable coverage of the reading material. At this level evaluation often suggested unpleasant consequences in the workplace if a genuine apology was not made.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was some coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but where these were listed or simply recorded. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. There was also sometimes, at this level, misunderstanding of some details in the texts or an unbalanced grasp of ideas. It was sometimes believed that the required apology was to the boss, not the colleague, or even that the addressee required the apology from the co-worker. These responses were obviously muddled but also opportunities for evaluation were lost because of the misreading of the task. In a few responses, it was assumed that the commercial company featured in Text A needed advice on how to apologise correctly and the missed meeting was never mentioned.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer roots in the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

## Marks for Writing

### Style and audience

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for a letter to a friend, whose specific concerns and point of view could be understood. Most responses showed a clear understanding of this required register, even where technical writing skills were less effective, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, some attempted to establish this relationship with reminders of shared family or educational history, or past misdeeds where an apology had been required. Some high scoring responses used a friendly but slightly more authoritative style, as if the intended recipient of the letter were a little younger or had some history of causing offence (perhaps by persistent lateness or forgetfulness, or insensitivity to the needs of others) in the workplace or earlier at school. In some, sophisticated language use allowed the conveyance of subtle and nuanced ideas. Here arguments were presented in an engaging way but made their case clearly and effectively. At the highest level, responses revealed a mature understanding of the politics of the workplace and the desirability of ensuring good relationships there and at the same time protecting one's own integrity.

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage the audience often worked well, with reference career paths and shared history maintaining an effective register, without resorting to the overly colloquial slang of a few responses. In these, in reaching for a less formal register appropriate for the audience, expressions such as *'gonna'* or overly loose sentence structures more redolent of speech patterns were used which were not

appropriate for a letter in the context of an examination where a range of writing skills was to be demonstrated.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent style. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward, though these responses were rare. More commonly, phrases and sentences were lifted and in some cases increasingly so as the response developed. In less effective responses awkward paraphrasing was seen with syntactically incorrect insertion of phrases from the text. In this examination session fewer instances of inappropriate reference to 'Text A' and 'Text B' which negatively affect the register were seen.

## Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a cohesive piece. The opening and concluding sections of the most effective responses, apart from the necessary pleasantries and salutations, tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the repetition of similar ideas which appeared in both. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide coherent judgement and advice and were more dependent on the sequencing of the original texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas. While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for, and a concluding recommendation was not infrequently in apparent contradiction to the weight of selected points preceding it.

## Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a Writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only engaging in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used to persuade the reader.

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation within sentences.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually plain, the language used was generally accurate. Sometimes the friendly and conversational style of the opening was followed in the body of the letter with an impersonal, discursive style close to the language of the texts and lacking convincing, direct address. A range of basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical mis-agreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this range included 'colleague', 'amends', 'apologise'/'apologies'.

Inaccurate sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given

marks in Level 4 for Writing or for Reading because both the content and the style of the response was not the candidate's own.

**Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:**

- be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts
- look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out
- group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, inaccurate grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

## Section B

### Descriptive writing

**Question 2 – Describe a room before and after being decorated or renovated.**

**Question 3 – Write a description with the title, ‘The performer’.**

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions were interpreted in a wide variety of ways which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of rooms before and after decoration or renovation. Reactions to the refurbishment were not always favourable and where candidates made use of the implied sense of nostalgic memory in the task, responses were often imbued with significance from childhood. The second question elicited a range of different types of performer, human, animal, and even abstract forces of nature, although surprisingly, few sports stars. The majority focused on a single dancer, singer or musician revealed on stage, often dramatically, by swishing curtains and a single spotlight. Many effective responses were able to evoke the reactions of the narrator to the performance vividly, often breathless wonderment at the beauty of the performer, or the stunning quality of the performance. In some, this reaction was to the pathos of an exhausted, old or unwilling performer being forced one way or another to continue.

Responses, as is always the case, were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. In both questions, some responses lacked real clarity so the room was full of ‘stuff’ that needed to be cleared away, and later only the value judgements, ‘amazing’, ‘fabulous’ etc, were employed rather than the detailed description which could create the ‘convincing picture’ of Level 5. Lower in the mark range, responses to both questions were rather prone to narrative though Examiners rewarded description wherever such details appeared. In the first question, many responses had detailed narrative sections about the purchase of materials and furniture and awkward lapses between ‘before’ and ‘after’, while in the second lengthy journeys and event planning sometimes prevented immediate focus on the performer.

Some effective responses to the first question often described rooms from much earlier childhood or those of beloved but now deceased grandparents, which were now to be renovated for the present owner. Those awarded marks in Level 5 or 6 included a level of detailed observation that gave the description credibility and interest rather than relying on cliché and often incorporated memories from the past which gave the response an emotional impact. One response described ‘teetering boxes piled high swayed precariously in every corner of the decrepit room ... sleek polished cabinets took their place ... but the precious moments enjoyed here would not be replaced so easily ...’

Examiners noted that a significant number of responses awarded marks at the top of Level 5 or in Level 6 featured renovations or refurbishments which had been eagerly anticipated by a young narrator but were met with unexpected sadness or disappointment. One such described the conversion of a childhood bedroom to a gamer’s paradise but, ‘I was greeted with white walls. Not brown walls. Not brown walls with doodles on them. Not brown walls lined with dog-eared photos of my family. White walls. An odd cold sense of realization wrapped itself round my throat ...’ Here the impact of the change on the narrator was increased by the assured and deliberate use of sentence fragments. One response awarded marks at the top of Level 6 had interpreted the title rather liberally and produced a most engaging and effective picture of the restoration of a long-derelict greenhouse: ‘The interior, battered by the relentless vicissitudes of many seasons, decays painfully ... walls ravaged by lichen growing unchecked, a sickening pale green like gangrene on an untreated wound ...’ The transition from past to present, old to new, which many writers found challenging, was here handled very deftly with an intervening description, employing mostly olfactory imagery, of the arrival of carpenters and glaziers, ‘the air around them pervaded with the sweet odour of sawdust ... clashing with the putrid musk of decaying vegetable matter ...’

The second descriptive writing question, although rather less popular than the first, produced a high proportion of responses in the top levels. These more effective responses demonstrated some very skillful openings creating the anticipatory atmosphere just before the performer, and the captivating first moments of the performance. Structure was often tightly controlled, using the duration of the performance itself, and involving the reader by describing moments of virtuosity or intensity triggering spontaneous applause. Some descriptions engaged the reader by creating great pathos, describing reluctant performers rather past their prime, but skilled at pretending otherwise, or in depicting circus animals driven to degrading and exhausting acts: ‘With eyes like ebony marbles that were empty, the seal pitifully scanned the arena. The skin around the eyes sagged with age; pearly, silver whiskers framed the snout and snowy hair was starting to sprout

*from its nose. How long had it been incarcerated in Sea World?’ In another, the performer was a butterfly observed in a garden: ‘Glistening droplets cover her stage like rare jewels, remnants of the morning’s rain. The supportive chirrups from the sparrows urge her to continue her dance.’*

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created convincing, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader’s attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure, often provided by the narrator’s reactions or a specific atmosphere, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve fewer striking images and more stereotypical ideas. In the first question, in the attempt to create contrast, responses were often exaggerated with rooms so squalid as to lack credibility, with dreadful stench, rotting matter and vermin infestation. When renovated, these rooms were not infrequently now floored with marble, with golden doorknobs and chandeliers. Writers struggled to employ effective structures, often using a laboured point-by-point system: the bed used to be.. the bed is now; the walls were... the walls were now. Where straightforward before and after descriptions were employed, they were sometimes linked by lengthy narrative sections about trips to the superstore to purchase furniture or materials or depicted the struggle to employ decorators. In the second question, there were sometimes lengthy preambles about getting to the theatre, or the audience and the architecture were given more prominence than the performer.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, especially in the first question. Here description was often inventory-like or resembled a teenager’s aspirations for a perfect bedroom, including brand names for their desired electronic gadgets. Here too there was often very considerable structural imbalance, with almost the whole response given over to the ‘after’ of the renovation or, rarely, to the ‘before’. In the second question, sometimes several performers – perhaps a rock band or a dance troupe – were depicted, with a resulting loss of close focus and telling detail. Occasionally a performance at a huge venue was the topic, with far more attention paid to the audience and the merchandise sales than to the performer. Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although some were accurately written. These were sometimes entirely narrative or the details included seemed only those appropriate to a shopping list.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed a confident ability to use both simple and complex language, striking images and personification, as well as a range of sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide-ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity. Obscure, sometimes archaic language sometimes revealed a lack of understanding of its meaning rather than a wide range of vocabulary.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. This was more apparent in the first descriptive option. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included mis-agreement, especially between pronouns and verbs, and the omission of definite and indefinite articles was also common and damaging to otherwise accurate, if simple, styles.

#### **Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content. Choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a specific atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.



## **Narrative writing**

**Question 4 – Write a story which includes the words, ‘... I set off as usual that day ...’.**

**Question 5 – Write a story with the title, ‘Out of time’.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations or were pre-prepared. Although less prevalent than in the recent past, in some cases this lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension, mystery or drama and to vary the pace of the story were essential elements of successful responses to both questions.

In **Question 4**, more effective responses incorporated into the narrative the sense of overturned expectations of normality implied by the phrase given in the task. There was a very wide range of scenarios, including bank robberies, earthquakes and tsunamis, plane crashes and all sorts of fast action dramas in which the narrator became unwittingly embroiled, the most successful often developing a sense of ironic reflection on what should have been an ordinary day. There were a significant number of high-achieving responses based on school shootings, the tedium of lessons and overdue assignments being interrupted horrifically by an armed intruder. In one extremely effective narrative the protagonist unknowingly attempted to help an apparently timid and vulnerable student out of the building before discovering that he was the perpetrator of terror. Some stories awarded marks in the top levels for Content and Structure were recounted by a narrator hidden, alone or with others, in a dark cupboard or bathroom, only able to discern what was going on by sounds outside, and terrified of alerting the gunman’s attention : ‘*The stale smell of the janitor’s mops filled my nostrils, but I did not dare avert my head in case the galvanised buckets went crashing over.*’ In this approach the absence of horrific sights of violence was convincing and effective. Whatever the catastrophe overcoming events in responses to this question, the narrator often reflected sadly in the conclusion on the attractions of the ordinary which had been lost forever.

Responses to **Question 5** at all levels of achievement were dominated by three storylines and their variants: running out of time in an important examination; trying to reach the deathbed of a loved one, often to repair past estrangement, and time travel or threatened abandonment in a dystopian society or outer space. High achieving stories realistically evoked the horrors of the examination hall and variously ruthless or kindly invigilators sometimes emphasised by it being Paper 2 of the English examination that was causing the problem. Setting and characterisation were often well established in the openings taking place the night before as the narrators exhausted themselves by small-hours revision, or idly neglected any preparation at all. Here, and in responses awarded marks in lower Level 5 and Level 4, tension was created with varying levels of success using time stamps and the presence of the large ticking clock. The approaching death of a loved one was often paced by the bleeping of monitors. Most narratives addressing both questions were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping although some candidates chose more ambitious structures, telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight. While such structures were more difficult to control, these approaches were rewarded for their ambition and engagement.

Examiners saw fewer pre-planned and not entirely relevant narratives in this series and only a few where candidates forgot to include the required phrase for **Question 4** or where it seemed immaterial to the plot. Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid attention to characterisation and how events were driven by character traits and choices.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and reasonably credible for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed, relevant story. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying, if not always engaging, resolution.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather was typical at this level. In the first question, getting out of bed, performing morning ablutions and having breakfast often preceded simple accounts of what happened, with a sameness of tone even when the vents recounted strained credibility with the eruption of zombies or aliens into the action. At this level there was also a tendency just to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by characterisation and setting. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. While most less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and, where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary. Speech punctuation was usually inaccurate at this level although the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as difficulties in sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 marks, such as mis-agreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the misspelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A common reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was inaccurate demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed but sometimes sentence separation was missing altogether. Though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were more prevalent in the descriptive writing, these issues also limited the marks available in the narrative writing.

#### **Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:**

- think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative.
- consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account.
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Do not rely on events.
- check your writing for errors which will affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes
- use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create effects.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

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Paper 0990/03  
Coursework Portfolio 03

## Key messages

*Candidates did well when they:*

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they identified in a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of events and situations
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

*The best practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:*

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for **Assignment 1**, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

## General comments

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. The majority of coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. There were very few incomplete folders.

The majority of centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. The Moderation Team reported that many centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were extremely helpful in helping moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

The major concern for all moderators was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Failure to follow this process often resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for adjustment of marks.

## Administration

Successful administration was when centres:

- used the new coursework checklist to ensure all administration guidelines had been followed
- submitted their sample and documents by the deadline
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves as well as all relevant documentation
- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and ICRC, including any amendments made during internal moderation
- ensured that each coursework folder was stapled or tagged and securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders without using plastic or cardboard wallets.

## Internal Moderation

Centres who followed the instructions for carrying out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook are thanked for engaging in this important process. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF).

## Using the coursework handbook

A cause of concern for all moderators was that some issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments by moderators:

### 1 Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the assessment criteria to work containing frequent, and often serious errors that had not been annotated by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and taking

into account all errors in the final draft of each assignment. To avoid adjustment of marks for accuracy, it is essential that centres engage in this process and clearly indicate errors in their candidates' work.

## 2 Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- A significant number of centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC.
- Some confusion was caused when centres included ICRCs for the whole cohort as well as the ICRCs for the sample sent; centres only need to send the ICRCs (securely attached to the coursework portfolio) for the candidates in the sample submitted for moderation.
- A small number of centres provided their own version of an ICRC instead of using the one provided by Cambridge; these had to be requested by the moderator, which slowed down the moderation process.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

## 3 Coursework portfolios

- A significant number of centres did not collate the individual assignments into complete coursework portfolios but instead placed loose pages of work into the grey plastic envelopes and despatched them to Cambridge; this caused moderators some difficulties when assembling the coursework folders and increased the risk of work becoming lost or mislaid. Centres should secure each individual coursework folder using tags or staples with the ICRC securely fastened as a cover sheet.
- Moderators reported that several centres used plastic wallets or folders to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets.
- Some centres included more than one rough draft in each folder; this is unnecessary and can lead to confusion. Please ensure that the rough draft included is clearly labelled as a draft.
- Occasionally rough drafts contained annotations and specific feedback; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on a rough draft, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements.
- Some centres included documentation not required for the moderation process; the only paperwork that should be included in the sample is clearly indicated in the Coursework Handbook.

### Comments on specific assignments:

#### Assignment 1

*Candidates were successful when:*

- they responded to interesting texts of appropriate length which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Moderators commented that many candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people, for example, single-sex schools, social media influencers, the pros and cons of having tattoos, climate change, the influence of fashion, and issues of local or national interest. Less successful texts were those which were old and outdated, texts which were too informative (and often long) or were of limited personal interest to the candidates, or texts which were largely visual, such as adverts. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully endorsed the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluating those ideas and opinions, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to select texts for their quality of written communication: moderators reported seeing a number of poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering



very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis. Moderators also reported seeing texts which contained potentially offensive or disturbing material. This may indicate that candidates were allowed to make their own text choices, but centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all texts used for **Assignment 1** are fit for purpose, and this includes avoiding offensive or unsuitable material.

Some centres set one text for a class or sometimes whole cohort. When this approach was adopted by a centre there was usually a tendency for candidates to produce responses which were very similar in content and structure due to heavy scaffolding. This made it difficult for candidates to create the original and sophisticated responses expected of the higher-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments of marks. Centres are advised that teaching a text to a whole class and offering a scaffolded plan for the response may be a useful teaching strategy for developing the necessary skills and knowledge for Assignment 1, but this approach should not be used for the final coursework submission; it is recommended that candidates are offered a choice of texts approved by the teacher.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

## Reading

Although some centres were accurate with their marking of reading, as in the previous moderation sessions, there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed, sophisticated response which made direct reference or included quotes from the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

## Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the writing was not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate ending to a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5 or below, Table A (writing) or below. The moderators noted that there was a general tendency for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. Moderators also noted a tendency for centres to over-reward vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

### Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- thoroughly explore, challenge, and discuss the ideas in the text
- avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, ensure that comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes identified in the text
- look for, and use inferences made implicitly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- develop points to create a thorough, detailed, and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose is clear and adapt the written style accordingly
- proof-read assignments to ensure punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

### Assignment 2 (description):

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many students wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. Moderators also noticed that there were fewer descriptions which slipped into narrative than in previous sessions, but this is still a relatively common flaw in descriptive writing assignments, sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which invited candidates to describe a specific scene from a play, or chapter from a novel, which tended to lead to unoriginal responses, or tasks more suited to narrative writing. Centres are reminded to set descriptive tasks and remind candidates to avoid using narrative writing techniques in their responses.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Successful responses included descriptions of towns or cities in which candidates lived, important events in candidates' lives, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques. Some moderators commented that this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding and use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images. The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions.

In addition, the work of a significantly large number of candidates contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the candidates' work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Quite often, the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning was lost altogether. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; moderators noted that on some weaker

assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

### Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description
- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences to create specific effects.

### Assignment 3 (narrative):

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and moderators saw some engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which did not invite narrative responses as they were too informative. These included accounts of Jack the Ripper or sometimes descriptions of film or book plots. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. Moderators commented that this sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of horror or murder mystery stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C (content and structure). Moderators noticed that there was a trend with a significant majority of the work sampled for centres to award marks from Levels 5 and 6 to writing which more appropriately fitted the Level 4, or below, assessment criteria. This was quite frequently a reason for marks being adjusted.

When moderators saw very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1** and **2**, moderators noticed a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for adjustment of marks. The comments made for **Assignment 2** with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to **Assignment 3** and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

### Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors such as punctuation, use of prepositions and articles, tenses, and construction of sentences.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

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Paper 0990/04  
Speaking and Listening Test 04

## Key messages

Centre administration was generally of a high standard.

Centres coped well with their application of Submit for Assessment (SfA). Where there were issues it was either a problem with successfully uploading all the centre's recordings to SfA or with not including summary forms (the OESF). Both these issues delay the moderating process so it is in the interest of both the moderating team and the centres to check that the uploading of recordings and relevant summary forms has been successful.

It has always been a requirement that centres provide summary forms (OESF) for all the candidates entered for a particular series and that these forms contain a breakdown of the marks for **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the test together with the total scores for each candidate. Sending only the summary form for the candidates whose recordings have been uploaded to SfA as the sample is not acceptable.

Each candidate's test requires a full formal introduction to be made prior to the beginning of **Part 1**. This introduction should include the centre name and number, the candidate's full name and candidate number, the date on which the test is being recorded and the name of the Examiner. This is important information for the Moderator. The overwhelming majority of centres were compliant with this requirement and are to be congratulated for their diligence.

There were relatively few issues reported with the general level of accuracy of the assessment. Where recommendations of scaling were made it was usually because centres had not differentiated appropriately between different levels of attainment, particularly in **Part 2** and specifically between Level 4 and Level 5 or where tests did not follow the stipulated timings yet were still awarded very high marks.

Where lenient assessment had taken place at the top end of the mark scheme for responses to **Part 2**, it was often because the candidates were given credit for responses that were not 'consistently' developed or where the Examiner was in control of the conversation and the candidate was too passive. It is for this reason that a **Part 2** Conversation based heavily on a question and answer model is discouraged.

Correct timing in the test is vital to successful performance. Generally, the timing of the tests across most centres was good with few instances of short **Part 1** talks or shortened **Part 2** conversations. As always, the candidates who observed the 3 – 4 minutes allowed for **Part 1**, through careful preparation and practise, were more successful. The timing of **Part 2** was generally accurate but it should be remembered that Examiners must ensure a minimum of 7 minutes is allowed for each candidate to enable a full **Part 2** to take place. Some candidates may well struggle to converse for a minimum of 7 minutes but in such cases the marks awarded should reflect the limited quality of the performance.

There were few reported instances of the rank order of merit being problematic within centres.

## Administration – General comments

For most centres, administration of the test was diligent, accurate and easy to follow. Summary forms were completed to a high degree of accuracy and samples uploaded to SfA were well-chosen and reflected the full range of marks awarded within the centre.

Where there were issues, the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements:

- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined. The Examiner should complete the introduction but the same principle of identifying key information on an individual basis is still relevant.
- Summary Forms including breakdowns of the marks for both parts of the test and the totals for the whole cohort entered should be uploaded together with the sample recordings to SfA.
- There were some instances where the total marks on the summary forms did not match the total marks for candidates whose recordings had been uploaded to SfA. It is important that the correct marks are uploaded and that the marks on SfA do match those on the summary forms.

### **Conduct of the test – General comments**

Once again, the standard of examining was generally very good with candidates being given plenty of opportunities to express their ideas and demonstrate their range of oratory skills productively.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered:

- If an Examiner feels that a candidate is very nervous and needs a moment of calming prior to the formal test beginning, it is recommended this is done before the recording is started. Examiners formally starting the test then engaging in 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their **Part 1** task is strongly discouraged.
- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of 7 minutes is met so that candidates are given the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills.
- It is also important that the conversations offer sufficient challenge to allow candidates to demonstrate the range of skills they possess. Focused questioning and prompts are needed to move the conversation forward, together with an adaptability on the part of the Examiner to absorb the candidate's previous comments and to extend the conversation as a result. A **Part 2** that is merely a question and answer session is not a natural conversation and as a consequence is limited in terms of the marks that should be awarded.
- Examiners who rely on a pre-determined set of questions disadvantage their candidates, in particular with regard to the mark for Speaking in **Part 2**. A question from the Examiner should lead to an answer from the candidate which then may lead to a comment or prompt from the Examiner that is connected to the same content matter, so the conversation develops naturally.
- Examiners who dominate conversations or who frequently interrupt candidates during the conversation do so to the disadvantage of those candidates. Good Examiners prompt candidates then allow them the opportunity to respond in full and to develop their ideas before moving the conversation forwards again.

### **Comments on specific sections of the test**

#### ***Part 1 – Individual Talk***

In common with previous series, the overwhelming majority of responses to **Part 1** were traditional presentations seeking to inform, explain and analyse. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach as it is the safest way to deliver a good mark for the candidate if organised, prepared and delivered successfully.

It was noticeable that some centres were unsure how to respond when candidates delivered a very brief speech or faltered within the first minute. Some centres waited in silence, until the allotted time for the conversation to commence. Other Examiners jumped in, eager to prompt the candidate to continue their speech; the latter sometimes resulting in the Examiner conducting a conversation which lasted in excess of 9/10 minutes.

There was a tendency with some Examiners to vocalise their agreement or interest during **Part 1**. Often this was well-intentioned but served to interrupt and cause the candidate to falter. Examiners should have the confidence to allow a candidate's rhetorical questions to remain unanswered and resist the urge to demonstrate audible agreements or surprise. The role of the Examiner in **Part 1** remains that of a passive observer.



Very strong performances in **Part 1** successfully combined excellent knowledge and development of a topic, a tightly defined structure timed accordingly and a lively delivery style. Choosing a topic that can be explored and developed within the 3-4 minute time limit remains the first step to success. A topic chosen merely to impress a Moderator with its supposed maturity or complexity but with which the candidate has little empathy, knowledge or experience will almost certainly lead to a lesser mark than one chosen because the candidate has a real enthusiasm for it. Similarly, 'Wikipedia' style talks where there is linear content based on numerous facts but little developed opinion or analysis do not tend to be very successful because they lack sufficient depth to engage the audience fully.

It should also be remembered that half the marks for the test are accrued in **Part 2** so candidates have to be prepared to discuss in some depth the topics they have chosen. Any lack of knowledge is quickly exposed as the conversation develops. When choosing appropriate topics candidates should seriously consider whether they can easily discuss and develop subject content for the allotted 7–8 minute conversation.

A strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in **Part 1** remains the structure underpinning the talks and supported by appropriate timing. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical arrangement that brings the concluding statement back to the initial point often helps candidates to fulfil 'the full and well-organised' descriptor for Level 5. Less successful structures tend to meander from point to point without such a strong sense of purpose. While structure itself does not confirm a mark in Level 5, it does provide a strong basis for candidates to exhibit their linguistic and presentational skills. Self-reflection and analysis remain strong elements in moving a talk beyond 'adequate'. Stronger candidates integrated a good range of language devices into their presentations adapting register, tone and pace to suit. Rhetorical questioning, the use of figurative language and other linguistic techniques were also used purposefully.

It is accurate to say that almost any topic can be successful if used appropriately but some do seem to lend themselves more successfully than others.

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that worked well include:

Emo Music  
Slow Fashion  
The Negative Effects of Fast Fashion  
Do Introverts Make Good Leaders?  
Formula 1 and the Environment  
Rubix Cubing  
The Importance of Art  
Life As A Twin  
The Healing Power of Reading  
Nature v Nurture  
The Influence of African Music  
Why Do We Lie?  
Lockdown and Me

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that were less successful include:

The Education System  
My Brother  
Cars  
The Pressure on Teenagers  
Using Educational Technology  
The Importance of Sports  
Video Games  
Football  
Social Media  
Body Image  
Influencers  
Reading  
My Holiday

Often these talks were poorly focused and lacked structure thus resulting in loss of interest for the audience and timing issues. Some less successful topics were chosen because of their perceived 'serious' nature by candidates who had limited interest in the actual issues involved. The resulting lack of knowledge was exposed in the **Part 2** conversation.

## **Part 2 – Conversation**

Generally, the **Part 2** conversations were well-conducted, and Examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions which enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas. After initial questioning to stimulate the conversation, the use of prompts, instead of a steady stream of further questioning, was often more effective in eliciting developed responses from candidates. Unlike in **Part 1**, the Examiner can influence the quality of the candidate's performance in **Part 2**. The most skilful Examiners asked open questions that fed directly from responses given by the candidate. Good Examiners engaged fully with the topic and corresponding discussion and increased the complexity and subtlety of the questions in order to allow candidates to appropriately demonstrate their ability to deal with 'changes in the direction of the conversation'. 'Changes in the direction' can mean introducing a new perspective on the topic or challenging a previously stated opinion.

Generally it was the case that Examiners were supportive of candidates by remaining focused on the topic matter introduced in **Part 1** and showing an appropriate level of interest. Occasionally Examiners spoke in too much detail and took too long to ask their questions. The aim should be to prompt and to lead rather than to debate. On rare occasions the Examiner interrupted a candidate's response when there was clearly more to be heard, thus directly restricting what the candidate could say in response.

In successful responses to **Part 2**, Examiners managed the conversation with an awareness of providing openings for candidates to respond and develop points – they took part in the conversation but were mindful of moving on and asking questions or using prompts as a priority.

### **Advice to centres**

- Adhering to the correct timings for each part of the test will allow candidates the best opportunity to be successful.
- Make sure candidates know the timings of the test. Ensure that their Individual Talk is 3 – 4 minutes long. You can help them in the test by interceding before 5 minutes and initiating the conversation.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test. At the planning stage a gentle suggestion to choose an alternative topic may be very beneficial in some cases.
- Try to dissuade candidates from delivering a memorised talk in **Part 1** that may have artificial fluency but lacks any emotional attachment and suffers from robotic intonation. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity.
- Ensure a full 7- 8 minutes is allowed for the conversation in **Part 2**. The Examiner can control the timing of this.
- Administering the conversation in **Part 2** can be quite challenging for Examiners so it may be necessary to practise just as the candidates should. Knowing the topic in advance and preparing some relevant back-up questions may help the Examiner but they should not be restrictive and the candidate should have no prior knowledge of them.
- Scaffold questions strategically to encourage higher level responses from more able candidates. This will help them to access the higher mark ranges.

### **Advice to candidates**

- Choose a topic you are passionate about and one you can talk about for 3 – 4 minutes then discuss in even more detail for 7- 8 minutes.
- Practise your presentation but do not learn it by heart.
- Have bullet point notes to help prompt you in **Part 1** but not the 'full speech'. You will be tempted to read it or, at the very least, deliver it without appropriate liveliness and intonation. 'Talk through' each bullet point in a lively and enthusiastic way.
- Structure your Individual Talk carefully, making sure that it develops points and stays within the 3 – 4 minutes allowed. Long talks do not earn more marks! On the contrary, an overlong talk will be regarded as not being 'well organised' (a bullet point required for Level 5 marks).
- Respond to the prompts and questions from the Examiner in **Part 2** as fully as possible by developing your ideas, giving examples and leading off into other aspects of the topic if you can.
- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches lively and interesting. Try to copy these techniques.
- Practise simulations of **Part 2**. There are as many marks available for **Part 2** as for **Part 1** so treat each part as equally important.