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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/01

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Overall candidates responded very well to this Paper and most showed a good or very good understanding of both passages. In general, most completed the Paper within the time allowed and most seemed to have left themselves sufficient time to produce well-developed responses to **Question 12**. Overall, Examiners were impressed with the level of candidates' writing skills in this exam and performance in the upper ranges was stronger than in previous sessions. This may well, in part, have been due to the candidates finding the stimulus material particularly appealing but perhaps more so it would appear to be as a result of good teaching focusing on the techniques required to answer the questions with success. This Report is a little shorter than those of previous years because there were considerably fewer causes for concern in the candidates' performance.

There is still the problem of candidates tackling the multiple choice questions, **Questions 1 - 6** on the Question Paper itself; the answers must be written on the answer booklet/paper. Candidates need write only the letter which they think is the answer to the question; there is no requirement to write out the corresponding phrase and certainly no requirement to write out the phrase instead of the letter (which is a waste of valuable time in the exam); similarly, it is not necessary to write each separate answer on a fresh page of the Answer Booklet. The Examiner is caused additional problems by such practices.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Questions 1 - 6

In general, these questions were answered well. A significant number of candidates succeeded in gaining all 6 marks; the majority achieved 4 or 5. **Questions 1** and **5** were the most frequently incorrectly answered.

Question 7

This question was well answered and many candidates achieved the maximum 4 marks. Nearly all identified the curagh as being a boat propelled by oars and most observed that it was made from wood and canvas.

Question 8

This question caused some problems and only a few candidates succeeded in quoting all three words ('sudden', 'momentary' and 'tumult'). The question specifically required that *three* words should be given; those who wrote out complete paragraphs, even if the words appeared somewhere within them were rewarded only if they clearly identified the appropriate words by underlining or some similar technique.

Question 9

Many candidates gained the maximum three marks. More would have done so had they been a little more precise in their responses. Simply to mention the walls and the floor of the kitchen was insufficient; to gain marks it was necessary to refer to their colour.

Question 10

This question was a little more difficult, but those who took time to explain carefully the writer's liking for the voyage and the articles he found gained all four marks. In general more candidates successfully identified that the appeal of the articles was due to their individual unique qualities and the fact that they were handmade from material found on the island than succeeded in explaining that the appeal of the voyage was due to leaving civilisation behind by travelling in a boat of traditional design with a unique motion in enjoyable weather conditions. Those who merely copied out the relevant paragraph were not awarded full marks as their answers did not convince that the material had been fully understood.

Part 2**Question 11**

In general this question was also answered well although most candidates succeeded in identifying more relevant points from **(b)** than from **(a)**. Not all read the question closely and as a result described the character and attitudes of Giovanetta rather than those of her father. There was some confusion as to what exactly happened to the car when it left the road and the precise details of the accident (the car taking off; being scratched by bushes; landing in a field; slowing down as a result of the brakes being applied; spinning and being covered in mud and finally coming to a halt) were only clearly conveyed in the very best answers. What Examiners found particularly pleasing about the responses to this question was that a greater number of candidates than in previous years scored marks of 4 or 5 for written expression. There has been an improvement in summary writing technique although there still remain candidates who think that indiscriminate copying of much of the original passage is the best way to respond to this task.

Question 12

Nearly all candidates responded well to this task and clearly picked up the details of the characters of Giovanetta and her father and the nature of their relationship from the source material. What was particularly pleasing was that they then proceeded to produce credible accounts which concentrated closely on recreating these characteristics and applying them to the situation from which they were required to begin their writing. As always, there were some responses which failed to use the material adequately: a significant number of stories began with Giovanetta miraculously at home in bed while the car remained in the field and some developed the point about the car taking off and told stories about the magical flying car. On the whole, however, by far the greater number of responses dealt successfully with the situation and described convincingly the fears of Giovanetta, her wiles in getting round her father's predictable temper and how the incident led to a greater maturity on her part and an awareness that, all things considered, his daughter was more important than the car on his part. This was a very successful question and was made even more so by the high level of linguistic achievement shown by great many candidates. Control of sentence structures, paragraphing, spelling, punctuation and idiom were of a consistently high standard and led to essays which were coherent, well structured and enjoyable to read. In general, the impression given was that candidates enjoyed this task and their answers revealed many very good qualities.

Paper 0500/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The majority of candidates answered this Paper with some enthusiasm. They found the theme of living and surviving in unusual environments, which linked the passages and the questions, an interesting one. There were some very long answers to **Question 2** and **Question 3**, but as always it was quality rather than length, which attracted marks.

At the top, candidates sifted and used the reading material imaginatively and effectively, but at the bottom, candidates with a limited knowledge of English experienced great difficulty in adapting the material and in expressing it appropriately and sufficiently for their thoughts to be understood. Some candidates would have been better entered for the Core tier. (In some cases, candidates were not first language users and would have been more appropriately entered for IGCSE English as A Second Language.)

Almost all candidates completed the Paper and it was extremely rare for there to be no attempt at **Question 3**. However, it was occasionally evident that the last answer had been rushed owing either to the writing of complete first drafts of or giving overlong answers to one or other of the questions in **Section A**. Good candidates briefly plan their answers in this examination; there is insufficient time to draft and redraft.

Most Examiners reported that scripts were sufficiently neat and well presented to be read with ease.

Most candidates had some understanding of what was required in the summary question, **Question 1**, but there were still far too many who confused commentary with summary. Some answers were too long. As usual, **Question 2** caused the most difficulty because candidates often failed to base their answers on what they had read in the two passages. **Question 3** was often well answered but a common fault was to repeat the material from the passage too literally and not to adapt it to the requirements of the question.

The Examiners frequently mentioned that candidates in some Centres were significantly better prepared than others for writing summaries, reading questions accurately, basing their answers on the reading passages and writing persuasively when required to do so.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

There were twenty-three facts listed in the mark scheme of which candidates had to find fifteen to score full marks for content. While there were many candidates who were given the full mark, there were others whose answers were very weak. Some candidates were very unmethodical in their reading of the passages, being content with picking out a few facts that immediately appeared from a superficial reading, or simply dwelling on certain parts of the texts.

Good candidates read all the way through with the wording of the question firmly in their mind and identified relevant answers as they went. This sense of focus not only on the passage, but on the question was important. Weaker candidates frequently lost focus in the second passage and included references to Bora Bora and comfortable hotels in an attempt to summarise everything and not just the reasons for not enjoying living on a tropical island.

The first passage was the more difficult of the two since candidates had to judge from the wording what Synge found remarkable about his experience. Plenty of work went into summarising this passage and most answers differentiated between the remarkable and the factual and descriptive details. For example, most candidates understood that Synge's descriptions of the movement of the boat and of the waves were of special experiences and did not confuse it with making the arrangements for fish-processing.

There were many examples of excellent answers from the final paragraph in which Synge argues that the making of everyday articles from materials found commonly on the island is an art form which establishes a link with the islanders and their environment. Because of the difficulty of this concept, the expectation was that there would be much copying from the text at this point. However, candidates successfully put much of this passage in their own words.

Although the second passage was easier, it was not necessarily answered more effectively. Perhaps candidates were already feeling the strain of so much concentrated reading, or perhaps the fact that the passage was less well constructed than the first caused difficulty. Good candidates realised that there was a good deal of repetition and explanation that was not wanted in a summary; poorer ones doggedly went on to summarise whatever was there, not understanding that once a point had been made, elaboration was unnecessary.

There were also five marks for aspects of writing, concision, focus and the use of own words. Much has been said from year to year about copying whole phrases and sentences from the text. This should never be done, and the use of quotations is not appropriate. Many candidates took an easy way out and there was much copying of 'glow of almost Eastern richness', 'full of beauty and distinction', paragraph two of the first passage and 'privacy can become very tedious'.

Some answers were very long, the record being three and a half sides. Even if there was some confusion about the rubric, 'Write about one side', candidates should have known that a summary is essentially as short as one can conveniently make it. Long answers certainly had no concision and were frequently full of the candidates' own commentaries, unnecessary detail and explanation, description and irrelevant material. This year however, there were fewer introductions and end-pieces, and most answers were off to a good start.

To summarise, good candidates wrote summaries which were:

- a series of facts that were focused on the question
- written clearly and concisely
- in the candidates' own words as far as possible
- without any commentary, digression, description, repetition or unnecessary explanation.

This example received the full mark.

Synge found the experience of leaving modern, civilised life behind him remarkable, particularly in a curragh, a traditional type of boat. During the journey he found the motion of the boat and the sight of the shining waves pleasurable and was impressed by the suddenness with which the weather was changed by the thunderstorm. On the island he noticed the sparseness of the countryside with the great slabs of rock. Inside the house he was particularly impressed by the beauty of the kitchen, the earth-coloured walls and the striking red dresses worn by the women. Here every article, including the nets hanging on the walls, was individual and represented the art that could be found in everyday life. He noticed how objects were made out of natural, local material, and he realised how they linked the people with their environment.

Davis's feelings about islands are less happy. He finds island life costly and he complains of a lack of amenities and home comforts. If he cannot be with friends he will be lonely and life will be boring. Once there, it is hard to escape and he may become victim to days of rain and even inundation of the island. Servants that speak his language are hard to find, complain easily and do not want to work in such remote places. All in all, islands only bring problems to solve and a general discontent.

Question 2

It was important for candidates to understand that it was in this question that they were expected to comment and to argue, as distinct from **Question 1** where they were expected only to identify facts from the passages. Hence the style and content of the two answers would be, as always, very different. Some candidates wrote a second summary and scored very few marks.

Good answers established an overview of Davis's attitudes, for example that he expected to be able to escape from the burdens of city life but that he expected all the trappings of civilisation and then complained when they turned out to be expensive or difficult to provide. Synge on the other hand, understood that once you turned your back on civilisation you had to accept the conditions and values by which the real islanders lived in order to enjoy an attractive, alternative life. Into this overview they inserted the relevant points from Davis's article and answered them as Synge might have done. Some excellent candidates wrote in Synge's voice and were most convincing.

Average answers gave a clear understanding of the second passage, starting with an appropriate, formal introduction and then dealing with points from Davis' article, one by one. Responses to individual points reflected the thinking of the first passage but did not refer to Synge's arguments in any detail or give examples from the passage.

Poor answers referred to Davis's article but often made an unsatisfactory choice of points, avoiding the important ones and concentrating on minor issues. The responses to individual points were cursory, generalised and frequently without reference to the first passage. One candidate wrote, '*Me, as a teenager, would not wish to live on an island without my friends*', an example of how some answers wrote in agreement with Davis and did not attempt to argue. References to both texts were rare, and one candidate wrote a completely unfocused letter which had no relation to anything written.

There was no invitation to candidates to use their own ideas (this is a reading and directed writing paper only) but those who did received credit if the ideas were logical and fair extensions of what had been read in the passages. If no connection could be established by the Examiner, no credit was given.

It is therefore essential that all candidates understand that the material used in answers to **Question 2** must be generated by what has been read.

There were also five marks available for the language and accuracy of the letter. There were many examples of good, formal style and accurate writing and it was quite common for an answer to score well here.

Part 2**Question 3**

Candidates were required to use the material from the diary in such a way that younger students would be persuaded to go on the holiday and also to express their feelings about the experience. Not all the articles achieved a balance between the expression of feelings and the evaluation of the experience on the one hand and the use of detailed reference from the diary on the other. Some candidates rewrote the diary virtually as it was, although in their own words; others wrote a complete evaluation without any reference to the diary.

Good answers were those that sifted the information in the diary and used it to illustrate the feelings about the experience. They showed clearly where the turning point came in Patchara's attitude and explained the importance of teamwork, getting to accept other people and not to stand on dignity, to give as well as to accept, and so forth. Each of these explanations was accompanied by one or two details from the text. Candidates wrote a persuasive introduction and did not dwell unduly on the unfortunate events on the first day of the holiday. Ecological matters were grouped together and well expressed.

Average answers followed the diary day by day. Candidates were careful to write in their own words, often transcribing the original into more persuasive language. However, they did not necessarily distinguish between events and feelings until the end when they added a paragraph, which made some sort of an evaluation of the holiday with at least a little extension.

Poor answers repeated the story of the holiday with very few changes and very little attention paid to any feelings apart from those clearly expressed in the diary. They were rarely persuasive and the language was ordinary. They were often lacking in order or one section, usually the first, was too long and unbalanced Patchara's real feelings about the holiday.

There were again five marks available for writing, this time for creating a persuasive tone and for the structure of the answer. Most candidates made some attempt to be persuasive, both in highlighting particular experiences and in choosing words and phrases that made the holiday sound worthwhile and inviting. The simplest form of persuasiveness was to add one or two words such as '*It was brilliant.*' Structure was not often a problem, since candidates could follow the order of the diary, but those who changed the order successfully were given high marks.

<p>Paper 0500/03 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

General advice remains as in previous sessions. As always, there was the need for a plan (as opposed to a first draft - for which there is no time in this examination), even if the subsequent writing did not follow it precisely. This was important to ensure that candidates had enough to say about the chosen topic and that the repetition of content would be avoided.

Secondly, there was a need to consider potential readers. There were too many dull, flat narratives seen this session, some of them strings of events without descriptive detail or arresting language. Thought had to be given to an interesting, perhaps unexpected ending.

Thirdly, the writing had to be well balanced. Long introductions that prevented the reader from getting to the main point of the writing were to be avoided; so was the injudicious use of dialogue that took up too much space and which added nothing to the plot or background of the writing.

Fourthly, when writing, candidates had to be aware in advance what they were going to say. It needed planning in the head for at least a paragraph at a time, and the paragraphs had to be a reasonable length, not a sentence at a time.

Fifthly, the writing had to be neat and fluent. That meant paying attention to the construction of the sentences and separating them with full stops.

To do all this required discipline and practice on the part of all candidates. To assume that they were 'good writers' and that they 'would do all right in the examination' was a recipe for disaster.

Some Examiners commented on general improvements in spelling and *some* aspects of punctuation. Particular problems remain the failure to use full stops to separate sentences, inaccurate use of tenses and writing at great length at the expense of quality. There was an increase in the number of incidences of texting forms such as 'u' for 'you' and '4get' which are not appropriate on this Paper. Many candidates continue to join words together that should remain separate, e.g. 'a lot' 'aswell' and 'infront'.

Candidates again had mixed fortunes when writing discursively. The cloning topic was more successful than the hatred one. Although knowledge of the first was often incomplete, candidates had more to say than in the abstract subject where they often had some difficulty in understanding the implications of the word.

These comments should not detract from the very pleasing work seen in many cases. As usual there were some excellent responses from natural writers, but it must never be assumed that this component is an easy examination option. There are many ways in which candidates can spoil their chances.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The victim

This was a very popular topic and was treated in a great variety of ways. The commonest backgrounds were home, school and the world of crime. There was much bullying, some of it bravely overcome, and death. The inclusion of emotion often made the events effective. Some victims suffered from sheer bad luck. However, there were stories that lapsed into far-fetched gangsterism, straight from B-movies, and other stories that were linear narratives without the descriptive writing that was typical of the best scripts.

Question 2

Write a story in which someone stands up for her/his beliefs

Not so many candidates attempted this topic. The stories were sometimes pedantic and predictable, but at other times moving. The content was usually to do with the religious and/or racial and/or party political. On the whole, the Examiners thought that this topic was well handled, that there was plenty for candidates to say, and that there were examples of complex thought. A few candidates lost track of what they were trying to do and allowed their writing to become a diatribe.

Question 3

Cloning....

Although some scripts showed a surprising lack of knowledge, this topic was generally done quite well. Candidates had plenty to say, particularly where they made the sensible decision to deal with both sides of the issue. Most took the view that cloning was a great step forward as far as health and medicine were concerned but a disaster waiting to happen if humans were to be cloned. Some candidates treated clones as if they were androids, fighting wars and doing all sorts of work that the 'real' humans would not attempt; in other words they were copies of humans without feelings, or copies trapped into subservience by a master race. There was also a theory that there would be so many of them that the result would be severe over-population. Very few candidates discussed the difference between real fears and media/film exaggeration and horror. Some candidates would have been well advised to consider the nature of their arguments before they put them forward. Others were able to grapple with complex ideas such as if there were two clones, which would have the soul? Religious objections were usually well handled. Whether the content was sensible or sensational, very few essays were badly planned and there was little repetition.

Question 4

Write a description of a busy market or a busy shop

Most responses dealt with a market. There was much good description and observation of detail, and most of the writing was planned well. For example, one effective piece started with a description of the general scene as the writer entered the market, then dealt with the various stalls, the noise and the sellers. Moving further into the market there were more detailed descriptions of the stallholders and an account of less than sanitary conditions. As the noise, the heat and the stench grew worse, so the writer passed out of the market and showed his relief at doing so. This way of writing a description, as if one were making a journey, was very sound. Good writers did precisely this when they responded to a topic about a busy airport in a previous Paper. Candidates often used a good range of vocabulary and wrote lively and bustling accounts.

Question 5

'He sat staring at the envelope that had arrived in the morning's post. The postmark on the front said "London". That was where his parents were on holiday, but the envelope looked official.' Continue the story.

This was probably the most popular of all the topics. Most of the stories followed the same pattern. Invariably the letter remained unopened while terrible thoughts went through the recipient's head. Advice was sought from brothers and beloveds. When the letter was opened it either revealed imprisonment, death or kidnapping, or a place at the University plus an airline ticket to London. The first option led to all sorts of horrors, some of them very silly, but the outcome was usually happy. For example the recipient passed through terrible traumas only to discover it was some sort of put-up job leading to a surprise birthday party. A less common outcome was that the parents came home early and surprised the recipient in the middle of all sorts of wrongdoings. The stimulus was sufficiently complex and the opportunities for the expression of emotion abundant enough to allow good candidates to score highly, but it was also a good exercise for the weaker candidates, many of whom made a good attempt to plan out their stories.

Question 6

Describe the most untidy place you know

Overall, this topic was done somewhat less well than the description of the market (**Question 4**). Candidates almost always described a room which belonged to themselves or to a close relation. This gave an opportunity for some wry humour, which was well received by the Examiners. However, it was the attempt to amuse by exaggeration that landed some candidates in trouble. After a page, it was impossible for the description to be of anything worse, or if it was, the writing became incredible. Nor was there such a good sense of progression as in the market topic. True the eyes and sometimes the feet moved around or into the room, but it was easy to lose the sense of direction so that the description tended to go backwards and forwards or in circles. These were good attempts, but very few of them sustained the effect. Some answers were very much in the form of mere lists of untidy things.

Question 7

'To hate people is always wrong.' Argue a case for or against this view.

In general answers on this topic were not answered as well as **Question 3**, perhaps because weaker candidates seized on it too quickly as seeming 'easy', without thinking through an answer. It was not uncommon for a response to start promisingly but to run out of material or get itself embroiled in impossible complications on the second side of writing. Most candidates were able to argue that it was wrong to hate and gave accounts of what happened when hatred broke out. Many compared personal hatred with wars between nations. The development of the arguments was rather less good. A fundamental fault was a failure to define hatred. Wise candidates made the difference between arguments and dislike and hatred quite clear. Weaker candidates became muddled because they allowed the emotion to apply at different levels, with poor selection and application of examples. Some essays had no illustrations at all.

Question 8

What, in your view, are three important qualities that distinguish a good film/video from a bad one, and why are they important to you? You may refer to specific examples to support your answer.

Usefully, the topic defined the structure. Candidates were asked to choose three features that they thought decided the quality of a film. Most chose plot, acting and background and showed some enthusiasm. However, the explanations were often weak. It was rare to find any ideas on what constituted great plots, scenes or acting, for example. Examples of good and bad films were often limited to naming them. What was missing was always the reasoning to prove their qualities. Some candidates did better when they chose less usual aspects of film making such as the name given to a film or the music. Despite the weaknesses, many Examiners reported answers to this question that were enjoyable to read.

Question 9

Write a story in which one of the people in the photograph opposite is the central character.

There were some entertaining and touching and often realistic love stories produced here, with some answers using the theme and setting the library well: one especially shy lad was introduced to the glories of literature as a result of a chance meeting in this location. By contrast, unfortunately a number of stories were crassly brutal in their plots, with only the most tenuous link to the photo stimulus. Candidates should be reminded that subtler approaches work better and that the horror genre needs a great deal of expertise if it is not to seem silly to the reader.

Final comments

As usual, the Examiners have recommended the topics that might best be used for practice for Paper 3 in the light of answers seen on the Paper this session. They are: **Questions 1, 2, 4 and 9.** **Question 3** should follow a Teacher-led discussion and the stipulation that both sides of the argument should be attempted. For **Question 5** candidates should be encouraged to reach the main part of their stories as quickly as possible. **Question 8** would benefit from some discussion of techniques of developing critical arguments and of using examples effectively.

Paper 0500/04

Continuous Writing (Coursework)

General comments

The syllabus requirements for this component were carried out to a very impressive standard. In particular the level of challenge was generally high and candidates were given every opportunity to score against the whole mark range.

Most candidates demonstrated that they could write in more than one style, and several Centres encouraged the use of informal as well as formal registers. Centres are reminded of the four basic types of writing from which they may choose to achieve variety: writing to inform, writing to argue and persuade, writing to entertain, and writing to analyse and comment. On the whole, writing to argue and persuade gave candidates more scope than writing to inform. There was as usual, some very good analytical writing based on media texts, film studies and school performances. Work based on literature was sometimes lacking in life and was best when there was a strong personal response. Empathic work based on literature was only outstanding when candidates could imagine themselves convincingly as a character facing the situations in the book. Diaries and letters were often done well but again sometimes lacked real imagination and conviction.

Comments on specific aspects of the work

Marking and commenting

The standard of marking and commenting by Teachers varied from Centre to Centre, and sometimes within Centres.

Some departments used forms on which the candidate and the Teacher could comment on each piece of work. Where these were used, the best Teacher comments were related to the criteria, and made specific comments about the level of complexity of content, structure, the ability of the candidate to use a range of language and sentence structures, and the accuracy of the writing.

However, some Teachers made few or no comments either on the work itself or on the candidate's assessment sheet. In these cases Moderators were unable to understand how the marks had been arrived at. Some pieces of work bore evidence of very selective marking for error, for example noting some spelling mistakes but failing to identify sentence separation errors. Some Teacher comments were largely subjective, such as '*What a lovely piece of work*', a view not always shared by the Moderator who was looking for assessments made against the criteria.

In some Centres where there were several Teachers, the quality of marking across the department was very varied. Luckily, there were few examples where individual Teachers had set tasks of differing standards or where inaccurate marking had not been brought into line during what was often very rigorous Internal Moderation. However, these Teachers were often identifiable by having given marks for individual pieces of work that were far astray from the final mark for the folder. For example, a candidate who was given marks on the A/B border for each piece but whose final, Moderated mark was several marks below would no doubt have had some questions to ask.

There are already well-established procedures in departments for task setting and Internal Moderation. To these it would be wise to add a session or session during which the whole department agreed on a marking policy and a policy for the assessment of individual pieces of writing. It is important that all Teachers within a department should adhere closely to these policies.

Authenticity and dishonest practices

It is most important that Teachers keep track of the drafting and redrafting of each piece of work. In particular, initial discussion and planning should take place under controlled conditions and all downloads from websites should be shown to the Teacher and acknowledged at the end of the work.

There were cases where Teachers had discovered work that had been copied but had nevertheless included it in the folder with a note. However, the Moderator did not wish to know what should have been a matter for the Centre. Such pieces should be removed from the candidate's folder and either replaced with a strictly controlled original piece, or should be regarded as missing, and the mark for the folder should be reduced by one third.

Teachers are also reminded that candidates are expected to correct their own work as part of their redrafting and that any advice given must not constitute the correction.

For Moderators to do their work it is important that as much information as possible is given about how the conditions under which each candidate has produced their writing and any help that may have been given. One candidate referred to help given by parents but did not give any details. Parents, like Teachers, are not expected to act in more than a generally critical role: the work is strictly that of the candidate.

Comments on specific pieces

The first piece

There were fewer examples of teaching sets where everyone had been expected to address the same topic. The best writing was where instruction had been given in the techniques of writing persuasively, sometimes as an essay, sometimes as a speech and rarely as a letter, and candidates had then been encouraged to choose their own topic, preferably one in which they already had an interest.

This led to writing that was clearly personal. Where information and issues had been researched, candidates showed quite clearly how what they had found fitted their own thoughts and beliefs. For example, candidates in at least ten Centres wrote about smoking. Some bombarded the reader with facts and figures and scientific research gained from sources not their own. Others used the information they had found to illustrate their own thoughts and thus to produce a piece of individual writing. Unless there was this element of originality, which should have been quite clear to the reader, the suspicion of plagiarism was immediately raised in the Moderator's mind.

Informative pieces were nearly always less effective than persuasive ones. Several Centres encouraged their candidates to write the words of speeches. This, in nearly every case, discouraged plagiarism, although some of the writing used rhetorical devices much better than others. Weak writing used too many words and not enough arguments, and tended to be repetitive. Nevertheless, this was a good way of approaching the assignments.

Some of the better writing was comparatively simple, for example letters addressed to the Principal of a school, giving advice about some issue that was current in the school. As usual, local issues often produced good writing because, again, they encouraged original views.

At the other end of the scale, there were some complex tasks which were not really appropriate to First Language English, such as 'straight' history and biology essays. Although these could be permitted in line with the outline folder requirements, such tasks are inadvisable for purposes of assessing first language skills. By contrast, if the test of good writing was special interest and originality, then *My thoughts on the mind*, *Extra-terrestrial intelligence*, *Peer pressure*, and *An African wedding*, for example, were good tasks.

The second and third pieces

The choice of task posed few problems. There were many examples of excellent fiction with tension, unexpected endings, time lapses, characterisation and above all, a good balance between the parts and no unnecessary detail.

The third piece was often well varied from the others. There were still occasional candidates who included two stories or two essays. The worst feature of the third piece was an occasional lack of conviction or of weight. As usual, writing in forms such as diaries, leaflets, letters, newspapers and so on should have been accompanied by some lessons to study the genre so that candidates wrote with as much panache as possible.

Assessment

This was broadly satisfactory, and external Moderators reported few problems, and most of the external adjustments required were fairly small. In such cases Centres had usually over- rather than under-marked. The reasons for over-marking were nearly always either that the candidates' command of an appropriate range of language had been over-estimated or that there were more errors than would have been expected at a particular mark. Some of these errors could have been corrected during proofreading which was often carried out extremely badly. Not all Teachers took this into consideration.

Final comments

Overall, the work was highly worthwhile and generally carefully written. It was pleasing that so many of the best folders exhibited a real enthusiasm for writing. Evidently most Centres take the view - which the Moderators encourage - that coursework gives splendid opportunities to develop any candidate's capacity to be an exciting, creative and original writer.

Paper 0500/05
Speaking/Listening Option

General comments

It is pleasing to report that almost all candidates entered were either genuine first language English users or highly competent users of English as an additional language. Moderators reported no cases of Centres entering candidates who were misplaced as a result of a limited command of English. The Role play and conversation do demand that candidates are fluent and that they can respond spontaneously – Moderators saw this in many cases and remarked that the standard of performance was generally impressive and secure. There was evidence again that candidates in the middle range of achievement were seeking to become more involved in the Role plays and to contribute more to the conversations. Centres should continue to promote these two developments.

Administrative procedures were completed generally well, with most Centres helping to make the External Moderation process as easy as possible. However, it is worth focusing on the following areas which need some attention:

- There is still some uncertainty about Internal Moderation. Centres are reminded that this should not take place if only one Teacher is used. At most Centres, *the normal arrangement is that a single accredited teacher should conduct the tests* and he or she should be responsible for awarding the marks to the candidates and for recording those marks on the relevant CIE forms. Only those Centres with a large number of candidates should use more than one Teacher. Moderators noted that at a small number of Centres, the Teacher appeared to have changed some of the initial marks awarded – by recording a different mark in the 'Internal Moderation' column on the Summary Form. If this is occurring as the result of subsequent consultation with colleagues, about candidate performance, then this is fine, and is probably good teaching practice. However, there is no need to record evidence of such consultation and if using only one Teacher, Centres should not enter marks into the Internal Moderation column.
- Some Centres are still failing to record a mark out of 10 on the Mark Sheet. The Moderators found that they had to complete a number of Amendment Forms because marks had been transcribed incorrectly; recording marks out of 100 is the most common error. The final mark entered on the Mark Sheet *should be out of 10* and should not be recorded as a percentage or an addition of the two parts.
- Some Centres are conducting a warm-up phase before the main test (along the lines of the English as a Second Language 0510/05 test). Please note that for this First Language component it is not necessary; indeed, *Centres need record only the two parts of the test*. There is no need to record any instructions to candidates, or any periods of silence while candidates are considering the Role play cards.
- There were still a few Centres who send deficient samples: i.e. which did not cover the full range of the marks or did not include samples of commonly awarded marks in the middle of the range. This makes the Moderation process very difficult.
- Some larger Centres are sending recordings of all of their candidates. The instructions for preparing the sample sent to CIE are very clear and are printed on the reverse of the Summary Form. Ideally, Moderators prefer to receive the minimum number of recordings (10 for most Centres, or 15 or 20 for large Centres) *on one or two cassettes*. Centres sending a large number of cassettes should discontinue this practice and adjust their sampling procedure.

Comments on specific aspects of the oral

The Role play

As in previous sessions, a number of Teachers handled the Role plays with expertise, adopting realistic and authentic roles and allowing candidates every chance to respond appropriately and to extend the role playing. It was apparent at these Centres that role playing, and in particular, strategies of response, had been practised.

There was again a variety of styles of role playing, from the very realistic and serious approach, to the quite informal and often casual approach. In all cases, it did not matter which style a Teacher or candidate adopted. The main aim of this section is to test the candidates' skills in fulfilling their roles convincingly.

Centres are reminded that it is permissible to expand the Role play scenario if they feel that in doing so the candidates will be able to illustrate their oral and aural skills further.

The conversation

There were a few examples of interesting conversations about topics and issues that candidates had clearly given a great deal of thought to. In these cases, evidence of planning and preparation was apparent, and the test served as a means by which candidate and Teacher could conduct a discussion.

However, Moderators are still reporting a wide range of success in the conduct of the conversations. Centres are reminded that candidates should have chosen a topic about which they show a good degree of interest and which should have been researched and prepared prior to the test. The main task of the Teacher is to encourage the candidates to engage in a discussion about the topics. Candidates arriving at the test venue who have not prepared appropriately will, in most cases, struggle to satisfy the assessment criteria. There were isolated cases of candidates who were given a topic on the day of the test, which was unacceptable.

The delivery of mere speeches is becoming less apparent but there are still too many cases being reported by Moderators. Teachers should ensure that candidates who are seeking to talk continuously are stopped, and that conversation prevails. The Moderators would like to commend those Teachers who do this. It should be noted that a candidate who talks continuously but aimlessly, and who is not presenting information, is still delivering a 'speech' and should be prompted to engage in productive dialogue.

To summarise: Moderators continue to request that more Centres engage in conversations in which the Teacher and candidate are sharing ideas, experiences, opinions, etc. giving candidates every chance to talk on equal terms with Teachers. Moderators feel that many Teachers need to explore candidates' topics more effectively and seek out more stimulating and productive discussion, and that they should not rely too heavily on asking a series of questions. This is a demanding and intricate skill, but when carried out effectively often results in improved candidate performance.

In many cases, however, the conversations were conducted in a generally competent manner and candidates spoke easily and at length about their chosen topics.

Assessment

Moderators reported a very pleasing degree of accuracy in the application of the assessment criteria. In the majority of cases, there was no need to make any adjustment to the marks awarded. Adjustments that were made tended to reflect a lack of preparation of material used for the conversation phase and/or rather mundane and pedestrian completion of the Role plays. At the top of the range, both sets of criteria do demand that candidates make an effort to involve themselves in productive dialogue and that the Teacher is there to facilitate this – a lacklustre approach will not achieve the highest reward.

Final comments

Moderators are pleased that the component continues to move forward and that a number of Centres are engendering situations in which the candidates are obliged to take the lead. It is noted by the Moderators that the 'Second Language' approach to conducting an oral is lessening and that the difference between First and Second Language oral work is being properly recognised by more Centres.

Paper 0500/06
Speaking/Listening Coursework

General comments

In the ideal portfolio of coursework, a Moderator would perhaps see a candidate completing three different tasks, each with a different audience in mind. It would be very pleasing to see that candidates have been involved in group discussions and pair-work, but have also been able to deliver individual presentations too. This is being achieved by several Centres but unfortunately still not all Centres who enter candidates for this component.

Comments on specific aspects

Tasks

The tasks chosen were generally suitable and allowed candidates to demonstrate a good range of language skills. However, some Centres should avoid setting tasks which are similar and should adopt an approach which seeks to offer three quite different tasks. There is, of course, a place for the individual task – but this should be enhanced by tasks which test candidates' abilities to perform with other people. The experience of the Moderators indicates that candidates particularly enjoy such scenarios.

Procedural obligations

In most cases Centres have provided candidates with suitable guidance and have helped to collate and organise interesting and productive material.

At the majority of Centres procedures were followed properly and almost everything was in good order. Tape quality was fine and sampling was accurately presented.

A few Centres provided a written commentary, summarising the manner in which the tasks were carried out and explaining how the marks awarded had been arrived at. Moderators find such additional documentation very helpful indeed and very useful in confirming a Centre's marks. It would be very pleasing if more Centres were to provide such extra information.

Assessment

Assessment was sound in almost all cases. However, a degree of leniency occurred in one or two cases where task-setting was limited to individual performance. To engage with the assessment criteria with appropriate vigour requires that a variety of activities be undertaken.

Advice to Centres

An External Moderator is seeking to fulfil two main duties while listening again to a Centre's coursework: initially to confirm the Centre's interpretation and application of the assessment criteria, and also to confirm that a variety of appropriate tasks have been completed. For the Moderation process to be completed efficiently, Centres should submit a recording of candidates who can be heard individually (this is usually achieved through the medium of a conversation) but should also include a sample of group work.

A few Centres asked candidates to complete the same three tasks. While this is permissible, it is perhaps not the best practice in fulfilling the aims of coursework. Moderators do encourage some Centres to allow candidates to be more involved in choosing the activities. It is by no means a requirement that all candidates at a Centre complete the same three tasks.