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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/01

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In general, most candidates completed the Paper within the time allowed, although there was some evidence of the need to hurry when answering **Question 12** and some of the responses to this task were somewhat perfunctory to say the least. In many cases, candidates who failed to complete this task satisfactorily were those who spent what would seem to be an excessive amount of time in writing rough drafts to answers to questions earlier in the Paper. Planning of answers is certainly an important part of examination technique but not when it becomes over-done and hence counter-productive! **Questions 10** and **12** caused the most problems, although Examiners felt that some of these could have been avoided if candidates had taken a little more time in reading the question carefully and responding to its precise requirements.

Examiners generally expressed positive comments about candidates' achievement, but as in previous years two specific causes for concern were raised. The first was over the practice of some candidates in some Centres answering the multiple choice **Questions 1 - 6** on the Question Paper itself. Candidates should be reminded that they need write (*on their answer paper/answer booklet*) 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. This wastes time, both for candidates and Examiners.

The only other general comment (made by the majority of Examiners) is to do with the difficulties involved in assessing scripts in which candidates' formation of letters is so poor that the reading of the scripts becomes impossible. This difficulty is often compounded by the fact that such scripts are usually written in very light blue ink. Examiners try very hard and spend long periods of time trying to decipher such scripts but candidates should be aware that if parts of what they write are indecipherable then no matter how sympathetic the Examiner may be s/he is not able to award marks to answers which cannot be read. Centres should advise candidates that it is very much in their own interests to take care over this issue.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Questions 1 - 6

In general, these questions discriminated well. Very few candidates succeeded in gaining all 6 marks and the majority achieved between 3 and 4. **Question 6** was the most frequently correctly answered.

Question 7

This question was usually well answered, and most candidates achieved at least one mark for it. There were in fact three possible points which could be made. These were: the dryness of the forest; the dead leaves of the ivy; and the breeze which started to blow.

Question 8

Very few candidates managed to gain all four marks available for this question. Again, there were three points which could be made in response to **(a)** which were that the comparison to "scuttling mice" involved the rapidity with which the fire spread, the way in which it spread in all directions and the rustling sound of the flames. (Hardly any candidates made this final point.)

The requirement to explain the reference to "tentacles" caused greater problems. Mention of an octopus was usually enough to achieve one mark but to gain the full mark it was necessary for the candidate to refer to the idea that tentacles were long and waved about in all directions.

Candidates should be aware that the rubric of the Question Paper reminds them to answer as far as possible by using their own words. Those who produced answers such as “The fire spread like mice means that the fire spread like mice moving over the ground” did not score highly!

Question 9

This proved to be a good discriminator. The least successful answers either picked words such as “authority” directly from the passage or quoted a phrase instead of a word. Others tended to produce qualities such as “generosity” and “bravery” which were difficult to justify. More successful answers referred to Arvind as being “authoritative”, “stubborn”, “arrogant” and “irresponsible” all of which could be justified by reference to events in the passage. In many cases candidates produced the right reason and the wrong word or vice versa; such responses received some credit.

Question 10

This question also discriminated well. Those candidates who did not read the wording carefully produced answers which lacked relevance. The question asked candidates to mention four points about the dangers of forest fires – *not* points about ways in which forest fires could be prevented. Consequently, they were expected to refer to the ways in which such fires could result in the deaths of human beings; the destruction of houses and villages; the destruction of trees and the deaths of creatures living in the forest, and the ecological consequences of such fires. It should also be mentioned that although the reference to the teacher was in the wording of the question in order to provide the candidates with a familiar context on which to base their comments, this was a question aimed at testing *reading* and they were, therefore, credited for the accuracy of the details gleaned from the passage which their answers contain.

Part 2

Question 11

In general, this question was answered well although only very few candidates achieved more than 15 marks out of the 20 available. Most, however, should be complimented on their success in observing the word limit for both parts of the question. Most were able to identify 5 or 6 points about the disappointing nature of Stockholm and an equivalent number relating to its more enjoyable aspects. However, there were many examples of inefficient selection; many candidates wrote at considerable length, for example, about grey salads, scorched lasagne and mushrooms tasting of newspaper when it would have been adequate simply to say that the writer did not enjoy the food in the bistro. Similarly, many candidates appeared to ignore the instruction to use their own words as far as possible and simply lifted sections from the original passage. Although these lifts were credited as long as they revealed evidence of understanding, candidates who answered in this way did not achieve high marks for the writing criteria associated with this question.

Question 12

Candidates were given a clear structure to follow in order to produce an information sheet, and most succeeded in including information relating to the suggested paragraph topics. This is a directed writing exercise and it is, therefore, important that details contained in the passage should be used to form the basis of the response. Some candidates failed to appreciate this and wrote imaginatively about Stockholm including unsubstantiated details of hot, sandy beaches and vibrant theme parks; it was difficult to award such responses with high marks for content. Other candidates apparently failed to notice the word “encouraging” in the question and included both the original writer’s negative and positive comments about the city with the result that most people would have been discouraged from visiting there because of the dirt, high prices and poor food. Better responses showed an intelligent understanding of the passage and cleverly referred to the negative comments in a positive way by encouraging potential tourists to delight in the knocked-about charm of the old town and to sample the interesting food indigenous to the country.

Overall, the quality of written expression was satisfactory to good. Spelling was quite sound although many responses revealed limitations of vocabulary and basic sentence punctuation. Paragraphing and structure were often positive merits of candidates’ responses. In general, the impression gained was that candidates enjoyed this task and their answers revealed many good qualities.

Conclusion

Candidates responded well to the questions and the Paper appears to have discriminated well allowing the majority of candidates to achieve their potential. Two main points need to be considered for future improvement. The first of these is that candidates must be encouraged to read the wording of questions carefully and, in particular, to use their own words whenever possible to convince Examiners of their understanding of what they have read. The second is the need to concentrate on accuracy of punctuation and especially in the use of the full stop; the highest marks for writing will not be achieved by candidates who do not reveal the ability to separate sentences correctly.

<p>Paper 0500/02 Reading and Directed Writing</p>

General comments

A number of candidates scored very highly on this Paper. For those who read the two passages methodically, the summary turned out to be comparatively easy, although some answers were repetitious and included unnecessarily long explanations. **Question 2** was more difficult since, as is always the case in this task in the Paper, the information from the passages had to be adapted and developed to meet the requirements. **Question 3** required candidates to process the stimulus material and to add detail to make the answer an entertaining piece of journalism. Answers varied from inaccurate readings and mundane articles to some excellent writing.

Few candidates failed to finish, although some of the newspaper reports were incomplete. This was usually due to over-lengthy answers to **Question 1**. Several Examiners complained about illegible handwriting and poorly presented scripts.

There were occasional failures to read the wordings of the questions correctly. For example, in **Question 3**, “rain fails to dampen spirits” was sometimes read disastrously as “rain falls to dampen spirits.”

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Summarise the reasons why fires are dangerous in forest areas and the effects of fires when they break out. (Candidates were required to write their answers to (a) Passage A and (b) Passage B.)

There were comparatively few examples of answers that consisted of phrases and sentences simply copied from the texts. Most candidates have learned to use their own words in order to prove that they understand what they read. Most answers were about the length of a side to a side-and-a-quarter specified in the question.

However, there were still many candidates whose answers did not read as summaries. This report has in the past given much advice on what is expected, and it might be worth revisiting the reports on the examinations for 2000 and 2001.

Candidates were expected to discover a series of reasons and facts that related exactly to the wording of the question. No introduction was required. The words “According to the first passage, fires are dangerous in forest areas because...” were sufficient.

Weaker candidates added the following to their summaries:

- lengthy explanations, for example, “dangerous because they are hard to control” (one mark), with the addition, “you try to put them out by stamping on them, but as soon as you seem to succeed, fire breaks out somewhere else”;

- repetitious examples, for example from Passage B, where there were several examples of whole forest areas that were destroyed. It would have been enough to have said: “huge areas of forest were burnt down”, but many candidates gave three or four wordy examples. The same was true of the point about the destruction of buildings.
- irrelevant material such as why the boys in Passage A behaved wrongly, or effects of fires known to the candidates but not included in the passages.

It was clear that many candidates had been interested in the story and had read it with care, but had not attempted to read the more difficult second passage. They were more likely to miss some fairly obvious points such as the two effects of the smoke or the closure of the National Park. There were three points concerning undergrowth at the end, but these were rarely unravelled and the topic was sometimes not mentioned at all. There were also some inaccurate readings. In Passage A it was said that lives were threatened, but many candidates read this as “lost”. In Passage B it was not enough to say that some areas of forest were lost when the amount destroyed was so huge. The candidate who said that billions of people were trapped in the park was surely exaggerating. Some candidates made little or no reference to the second passage in either of the first two questions, indicating that it had not been read or at least, had only been read fleetingly. Centres are reminded that candidates must give proof of having read both passages methodically.

The question had been purposely set out so that candidates would answer as **(a)** and **(b)**. This was so that there would be no confusion about giving answers that were similar and so that there would be no perceived need to make comparisons. A number of candidates presented their answers as one. Good candidates did well, grouping their points together. Weaker candidates found the exercise difficult and, on the whole, gave muddled and uncertain answers. Candidates may be assured that when the summary question is set as referring to **(a)** and **(b)** they are intended to answer in two parts.

Some candidates answered in the form of a narrative, particularly rewriting the story in Passage A. They often included the first part of the story, which contained no relevant material. A penalty was applied since the question was set in general terms so that a retelling of the story did not answer it. If a narrative summary were required, it would be clear from the question.

Despite these criticisms, several Examiners thought that the quality of summary writing was at last beginning to improve. Candidates would do even better if they remembered that concision was a virtue and that they should not comment on the topic, but confine themselves to the facts that they find in the passages.

Question 2

Write a brief report on ways to control the outbreak of forest fires and their effects in forest areas. You should include the following [...]

The wording of this question caused some confusion which was partly understandable. Some candidates thought they had to write down the effects of fires again, whereas the word “control” referred to both outbreaks and effects. However, the only candidates who suffered by this were those who only wrote about effects and who omitted the other parts of the question. No marks were deducted for writing about effects, but on the other hand, none were awarded.

Candidates should be reminded that they are expected to use and develop ideas from *both* the passages. Some took the question as an invitation to write creatively, entirely from their own imagination. Some largely ignored the question and wrote about safety from fire in the home.

However, there were some very good answers. These were candidates who developed their report from information in the first passages such as the following:

- What Paudini’s mother told him (paragraph 4)
- What happened in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8. Many of the best candidates developed the ideas about the frightening speed and power of the fire and the idea that children should be taught what a fire can do in such a way that they would want to avoid one. This part of the story also demonstrated the panic that ensued, so that many candidates wrote about how to behave when a fire occurred. There was occasional reference to being trapped in a fire (from Passage 2).
- The comments in the final paragraph about blame and responsibility and the place of school, parents and the media.

A careful reading and some subtle adaptation of this passage alone provided plenty of marks for a hard-working candidate. Those who did not take the trouble scored fewer marks.

The second prompt about fire fighting and prevention steered good candidates towards Passage 2 where there was a lengthy section about brushwood and whether it should be burnt in controlled conditions. Some discussion of this was necessary for full marks for content. It was not good enough to follow the original argument stage by stage. Some adaptation was needed: for example, the points about how clearance helped general plant growth were not relevant to the question.

In **Section A** the successful candidates were those who knew that **Question 1** was a fact gathering exercise where concision was important and where they were not expected to develop or to comment on the material in any way, while **Question 2** required the selection of ideas from both passages and their development and added detail and comment in response to the question. The two answers required different types of writing and thinking. Some weaker candidates mixed the intentions of the questions up, writing commentary for the first and summary for the second.

Section B

Question 3

Come to the Festival! (Writing a report)

This question was sometimes answered extremely well.

First of all, it was a different sort of reading question. There was obviously less to read, but it required the putting together of two sections of information (the timetable and the issues) and the opening headline. In particular it required an understanding that rain was expected, that it did rain, and that since this was understood when the plans were put forward, there must have been a Plan B.

Secondly, it was a test of re-ordering. Candidates who insisted on doggedly following the timetable and nothing else, wrote little that was not already on the Examination Paper. Some were so tied to the material that they kept to "local school" and "big project" as in the original wording. Good candidates provided an overview with enough added detail to lead the reader to believe that it was a real event.

Thirdly, it had to be in a credible form of newspaper report. The following mistakes were made:

- Some candidates wrote in their own voice. They mentioned what they did and their own thoughts and feelings. Reporters should not have mentioned themselves, but should have objectively written down what happened and who said and did what.
- What people said was frequently wrongly introduced. "I went up to the mayor for an interview and he said..." is wrong. So is "The mayor quotes" or anything else in the present tense. "The mayor said" is correct. This should normally be followed by words in quotation marks (direct speech) or the word "that" and no quotation marks (reported speech). Most candidates used only direct speech. The best candidates used a mixture of both. Some candidates used script form which is suitable for magazines but not for newspaper reports.

Good reports started with a simple, brief introduction. The best included a piece of information such as what the event was in aid of and how much money was raised, or an indication of how the students coped with the rain.

Good reports added to the material in the following ways:

- They described what constituted healthy food. Poor candidates missed out all reference to this.
- They described some of the costumes in the procession.
- There was a little detail from the mayor's speech.
- The moment when the rain started was made clear, and its immediate effects were described.
- Plan B was given in some detail.
- The part played by the celebrities was made clear.
- There was general praise for the actions of the students throughout the afternoon.

Poor reports:

- Used little of the material but wrote generally about what happened.
- Used too much general interview, too little fact and detail, and overbalanced the report.
- Wrote either in no paragraphs at all or included some that were overlong.
- Wrote about an event that was going to happen or that was rained off. One blamed the students for putting on a bad show.

Some candidates successfully used dry humour, such as what happened to the mayor when it started to rain, or how he was covered in mud when he insisted in joining in a football match, and so on. This circumstantial humour was very effective where it was not overdone. Using silly names for the mayor and the celebrities was not so successful; such practice is not recommended.

Writing in the form of a newspaper report is fun to do when the technique has been learned. Teachers are encouraged to teach their candidates some of the conventions and how to construct a report. In this case it was clear that some candidates were well on the way to being excellent journalists.

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

General comments

While there were many examples of good writing, Examiners reported that too many candidates may have failed to reach their potential because of failure to plan their time productively. It is important that candidates should be well prepared for this Paper and that they should consider how best to use the time of seventy-five minutes.

Selection of topic

Some candidates did not spend enough time over the choice of which question to attempt. Some were quick to choose topics such as **Question 7**, about sport, probably because they had discussed or prepared it in class. However, when they came to write, they had little to say and, without inspiration, the words did not come easily. They should have considered where their strengths really lay and whether their views on the subject would stretch to 350-500 words. It would have been worth spending up to ten minutes on selecting and thinking through a suitable topic.

Planning the work

Some candidates started writing without thinking through to the end. Others provided a simple plan, usually a set of numbered points. It did not really matter what sort of a plan was used since there are so many different ways of representing one's ideas, for example in diagrams or in picture form. Some however, insisted on writing a rough draft. This is not recommended since there is no time and because the final version rarely differs from the first except that it is neater. A plan might take up to ten minutes.

Thinking as you go

Good candidates thought in paragraphs, thinking, drafting in their heads and then writing. The result was orderly, neat and well phrased work. Those who launched into their writing without thinking often wrote pieces where one part was developed at the cost of another, or where the ending was unsatisfactory. Worst of all were candidates who redrafted as they went, crossing out lines at a time and expecting the Examiner to make sense of a badly presented piece of writing. Even after the time spent in selecting a topic and in planning there was enough time to write at the length that the candidate intended.

Candidates who make many errors will not gain access to the higher grades except in exceptional circumstances. Some candidates were clearly not 'first language' candidates in the sense that they did not have enough language to express their ideas adequately or that there were strong signs of literal translation from their mother tongue at the expense of normal English grammar and usage.

Two problems were common. The first was tense, either the sequence of tenses or the habit of starting in one tense and changing to another for no particular reason. The second was paragraphing. Occasionally candidates wrote without any use of paragraphs. More commonly, paragraphs were uneven, for example beginning and ending with a short paragraph and writing the main part in one long paragraph. Sometimes the thought was disjointed by the use of many short paragraphs, typically between eleven and fifteen. The best writing typically consisted of five to seven paragraphs (not counting extra paragraphs where dialogue was used). The correct use of paragraphs was essential where candidates wisely took time to think as they wrote (see above).

There were many complaints from Examiners about handwriting. Examiners often had extreme difficulty in reading abnormally small writing and very untidy writing where some words were impossible to make out. Bad handwriting meant that Examiners could only read in fits and starts. While Examiners made every effort to understand what was on the page, some candidates had only themselves to blame when their work could not be read.

Examiners agreed that if candidates were to perform well in this Paper, they had to be taught techniques of writing under examination conditions. Classroom and coursework writing, where much time may be spent in editing and revising early drafts, is a very different situation and candidates must not confuse the two.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The best teacher I ever had

Examiners suspected that in some cases candidates saw an opportunity of offloading a 'prepared' answer. Teachers were typically friendly, pretty or handsome, they understood problems and explained things at length, getting their students through their examinations. But such writing tended to have little life and simple, superficial accounts here did not promote much display of language. Better attempts included the best teacher who told a student the truth about her worst teacher and promoted sympathy and understanding. There were some good accounts of teachers who had to leave, either for a new job or because of illness.

Question 2

'The richer you are, the happier you are.' How far do you think this is true?

Some of the answers to this question were well ordered and were in the form of structured arguments. The challenge in writing this sort of essay is that each paragraph has to contain different material, but that there has to be a step-by- step progression from the beginning to the end. Structure was made easier here by the fact that candidates could start by arguing for the proposition and finish by arguing against. Many essays however, lacked any sense of progression. What is more, their arguments had little strength. Where they had a good point, candidates tended to write long, convoluted sentences that blurred the meaning. Many of the arguments were common to candidates, in particular the one that stated that poor people were often perfectly happy in their poverty. While the Examiners were reasonably sure that candidates meant nothing bad by this, the expression was often not good enough to be sure.

Question 3

Time stood still

Candidates answered this question in a variety of ways and their stories were often original and exciting. The title was almost always quoted at some point in the writing and its use usually indicated a moment of high tension such as a loss of consciousness or a psychological crisis. Other candidates interpreted it as a moment where everything around them stood still and they were able to right wrongs or create mayhem until everything returned to normal. There was some awkwardness where the phrase was used at the end of the writing or where it was used more than once.

Question 4

'Honesty is the best policy.' Is this always true? Give your views.

This question was attempted by few candidates and was generally done disappointingly. Candidates often ran out of material after about a side or became involved in very unclear abstract arguments. Some arguments involved trust as well as honesty and became even more confusing. Centres are advised to make sure that candidates are able to present convincing arguments if they are to attempt this sort of writing.

Question 5

Write a story which begins: "She looked at the car as it disappeared in a cloud of dust, and knew that things would never be the same again...."

This was the most popular question and it was a stimulus that gave rise to many effective and persuasive stories. The subject matter was generally of broken relationships, partners and parents breaking up or parting from a sibling, but candidates in some areas of the world more often wrote of violent crimes. The wording of the quotation gave rise to instances of flashback and time lapse. One candidate wrote her story as three episodes, each clearly separated by a period of time. This technique was cleverly and effectively managed, without confusion. Many candidates realised that the lead up to the departure of the car was at least as important as what happened next. This was generally well done, although some candidates became so involved in the story that they wrote at unnecessary length and over-reached themselves in the time allowed.

Question 6

[Poetry stimulus]

This question was very rarely attempted and there were too few answers seen to make general comment appropriate.

Question 7

'Sport is an essential part of life.' How far do you agree?

This was quite popular, but as with other essay topics, many candidates ran out of convincing material once they had talked about health. Some were able to write about sport and national pride at some length. The few who also took the opposing view, that sport was not essential, had a little extra to write about. However, the evidence of the generality of answers proved the point that unless a candidate is confident about essay writing it is inadvisable to attempt it just because the subject matter might seem easy.

Question 8

Shopping

This allowed a variety of approaches. Many of the responses were simple accounts of family shopping for clothes, followed by a meal at McDonalds. They tended to be much better where candidates' writing gave rise to an interesting event. For example, in one case, a girl saw a garment she really wanted and quarrelled with her mother when it proved to be far too expensive. The situation was resolved when she saw the same garment in another store at a fraction of the price. Another high scoring answer was a powerful story about a boy who refused to shoplift, only to be discovered with an item planted in his pocket by his erstwhile best friend.

Question 9

[Photograph stimulus]

Examiners felt it was a pity that more candidates did not answer this task. The handing over of the crying baby was a powerful image and it led to some stories not unlike those in **Question 5**. In many scripts the baby was handed to the girls and the mother disappeared in a cloud of dust. Some candidates made it the boy's story, starting from the image and jumping to the present time when the now grown-up man returned to find his mother who, in one moving story, recognised him immediately.

Final comments

The Examiners usually recommend those questions that would be best to use with candidates who are preparing for next year's examination. This year they have chosen **Questions 3, 5, and 9**, which may be done without any class discussion. **Questions 1 and 8** would benefit from some discussion about how to make them interesting and original. If Centres wish to attempt an essay question, **Questions 2 and 7** might be used, accompanied by classroom discussion on structure and logical progression.

<p>Paper 0500/04 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

The continuous writing folder has established itself over the years as a worthwhile representation of a candidate as a writer. It is intended to be a snapshot of what can be achieved in a variety of styles and to be taken from a number of written assignments completed during the course. The contents of the folder therefore represent the candidate's best work.

The work in this session was of a very high standard. More care was taken over the selection of tasks and there was more ingenuity in the choice of argumentative topics. There was less reliance on literary critical essays for the third piece and some confidence was shown in allowing candidates to write more experimentally.

Samples sent to the Moderators were generally well chosen and the marking was accurate, on the whole.

Unfortunately, as in previous sessions, a significant number of candidates deprived themselves of higher reward by careless failure to proof read their work adequately. Furthermore, External Moderators noted some foolish and occasionally embarrassing (mis-)use of the computer spell-checks.

The standard of presentation of word-processed work varied. Some paragraphing was very untidy.

Comments on specific aspects of the work

Task-setting

In an earlier report it was suggested that the best way of obtaining argumentative/persuasive writing was to teach the principles of constructing an argument and of expressing it in appropriate language and then to give candidates their own choice of topics. An alternative was to suggest that they wrote the words of a speech, following some of the simpler conventions of rhetoric. It was also noted that candidates wrote more interestingly on topics that were of concern to them and that had a local flavour.

There were signs that this advice had been taken in that 'stock' class topics such as capital punishment, euthanasia and animal rights were very much less common this session. Examples of topics which appeared to interest candidates and which certainly stimulated the Moderators included the following: Education in Hong Kong; The Pursuit of Perfection; Mobile phones; Steroids in sport; Homosexuality; Eco-tourism; Housework for men; Marrying young; Changes in life in Buenos Aires; A Presidential speech; Governmental misconduct; Violent crime.

Candidates frequently had strong personal feelings about their topics and wrote powerfully, not attempting to hide their views behind unnecessarily academic language.

There was also a wide range of informative subjects, some of them academic -- such as Gandhi or Concentration camps -- some of them descriptive -- such as accounts of places that had made an impression on candidates -- and some topical -- such as the Springbok tour or the success of the school band. Among the best were accounts of activities that the candidates had actually taken part in and the accounts of places. The secret here was to communicate the atmosphere of the place to the reader; one very effective example scene was in a description of the snows on the mountains in a lonely part of Pakistan.

For the second piece of writing, there were, as usual, many titles. Personal experience varied from the dull narrative with plenty of events but not much else, to the intensely descriptive written by candidates whose memories of the sights and sounds of the event had not faded with time. Where candidates had studied fiction and had then invented their own story, the writing was often a little better. There were stories based on the sensibly unexpected, with trick endings and well-managed climaxes. Some of the descriptive work was excellent, for example a surrealist item called 'Jungle of Wicker'.

While there were some good examples of well-written and weighty leaflets for the first piece, some other genres used for the third piece were less successful in the sense that they lessened the effect of the folder as a whole rather than gave strength to it. Centres are reminded of one or two easy ways of making sure that such writing gives opportunities to candidates to show their best:

Diaries: are best presented as one or two entries, allowing for the development of ideas and the use of detail. Make sure that the language is sufficient to make an impact.

Newspapers: beware reports of simple events. It is better to imitate the language of quality rather than tabloid press. Newspaper articles or comment columns may be better than news reports.

Poems: beware rock lyrics or personal love poems. Encourage something more original and imaginative and ask candidates to add a commentary about the writing of the poetry.

Several Centres set reviews of films and assignments based on media work. These tended to be more personal and lively than the responses to literature.

Assessment

The Moderators continued to make small adjustments. Hardly any Centres appeared to have an insecure rank order and that was not so serious that an adjustment could not be fairly made. Centres are thanked for the time they spent standardising the marking of different sets. The Moderators noted adjustments to colleagues' marking and in every case approved them.

It was rare to disagree with assessments made on the grounds of error. Sometimes Teachers who did not expect their candidates to make any mistakes over-reacted to them. However, before awarding marks in Grade A, Teachers should consider carefully the nature and frequency of mistakes. The Moderators only expected to see very rare instances, even at a mark of 36.

There is still some over marking in respect of sentence structures. At Grades A and B the Teacher should be looking for evidence of fluency provided by the confident use of complex sentences with occasional simple sentences used for effect. Evidence of a wide range of vocabulary is also required.

Word-processing and proof reading

The standard of presentation was generally high.

Unfortunately, in general there was too little care shown over proof reading. Candidates after candidate had not checked for spelling, words missed out and inserted, the use of commas and full stops. One candidate, given a mark in Grade A, offered "he shrudded" for "shuddered", "a stomp silence", and "the idea stroke him". Another candidate in the same Centre wrote "whit" for "with." No one, including the Teacher, had noticed these errors.

Most Teachers commented at some length on the work but did not always mark the script itself. Comments were sometimes unduly subjective and did not refer to the marking criteria; but fortunately such cases were in the minority.

<p>Paper 0500/05 Speaking/Listening</p>

General comments

At the top of the range, there were some very secure and confident responses, using English fluently and seeking to extend role playing and engage in discussion. There was more evidence than in previous sessions that candidates in the middle of the range were seeking to extend their involvement in the role playing and contribute more to discussion. This is a positive development and needs further encouragement. There were relatively few Centres whose candidates were more suited to an English as a Second Language (E2L) entry; but this issue is still a concern and Centres should remember that this is a *First Language* oral test.

Administrative procedures were completed properly by most Centres. However, there were problems in the following areas in some cases

- Some Centres are still failing to record a mark out of 10 on the Mark Sheet. External 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 must be out of 10 and should not be recorded as a percentage.**
- The assessment criteria assume first language status, and candidates exhibiting second language weaknesses will not score highly on this test. (This is not to say that E2L users cannot perform well, if their command of English equates to that of a good native speaker.) Centres with a large number of E2L users need to think carefully about entering such candidates for this component – the IGCSE E2L examinations may well be more appropriate.
- There were a number of Centres who sent deficient samples. Moderators received samples 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.
- Although the quality of the recordings is generally good, there are still some Centres who fail to provide clear and audible recordings. Excessive background noise is usually the problem. Moderators should not have to struggle to listen to samples; but perhaps of more concern, excessive background noise must surely affect the concentration of candidates. This is an *examination* and a small number of Centres need to find more suitable locations in which to conduct the Test.
- Centres are reminded that there is no need to record any warm-up which may have taken place. Ideally, the Moderators would like to receive samples which contain recordings only of the role play, followed immediately by the Discussion. Recording long periods of silence is also not necessary.
- There is no need to write marks in the Internal Moderation column on the Summary Sheet, unless internal moderation is being conducted, and this need only be done at Centres with a large number of candidates, requiring the use of more than one Teacher. It is confusing for the external Moderators, who need to verify that internal moderation has been conducted properly. If only one Teacher has been used, there is no need to record any internally moderated marks.
- Centres are reminded that unless the Centre is a large one, only one Teacher/Examiner should conduct the test.

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.

However, problems did arise with slightly weaker candidates, who were unable to take the lead, and very weak candidates, who were unable to respond appropriately. Some Teachers chose to intervene too early and perhaps say too much, dominating the situation, making a suitable response even more difficult for candidates. At these times, Teachers are advised not to intervene, but to wait a little longer.

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 an Teacher or candidate adopted. The main aim of this section is to test the candidates' skills in fulfilling their roles convincingly. Some Teachers should take note that it is the candidate who is being assessed and not the Teacher.

The Conversation

There were 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, many Teachers still appear to prefer asking a series of questions, and the result of this approach is that candidates are not encouraged to engage in a real *dialogue* with the Teacher. In general, Teachers need to regard the conversation as a two-way discussion, which is not too dependent on questions. The Moderators would like to hear more candidates being encouraged to involve the Teachers in conversation. Teachers should consider making the occasional comment, for example, which might stimulate a productive exchange of views. A number of conversations continue to be based on Teacher and candidate 'agreement', and as a result, are not particularly interesting or productive. Some Teachers may wish to consider varying their style and approach in light of these comments.

The delivery of speeches is becoming less apparent. 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 conversation. The purpose of the assessment criteria is to measure candidates' skills in maintaining and sustaining a conversation which has a central theme. Generalisation leads to a level of informality which does not correspond to the vigour expected by the criteria. This pattern is often seen with weaker E2L candidates, who do not have the linguistic ability to develop ideas.

Summary

Moderators would still like to see more Centres engaging in conversations in which the Teacher and candidate are sharing ideas, experiences, opinions, etc. and this means that candidates need to be given every chance to talk on equal terms with Teachers. There is more evidence that this is happening, but Moderators feel that many Teachers need to explore candidates' topics more effectively and seek out more stimulating and productive discussion, even if this means modifying the topic or broadening its theme.

Assessment

The majority of Centres were accurate regarding the placement of candidates into the appropriate numerical band. In almost all cases where an adjustment to the marks (invariably slight) was necessary, Teachers had been found to be generous.

The main areas where adjustment to the marks proved to be necessary remain the same:

- Candidates awarded 9 or 10 marks who had not been able to extend the role play or explore the subject matter of the conversation vigorously enough.
- E2L candidates awarded 5 or 6 marks whose performance could not be described as competent.

Final comments

Moderators are pleased that the component is moving forward, and that more Teachers are responding to the challenge of developing discussion which is less focused on candidates answering questions.

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening

General comments

There was a very small entry this session for this component. All candidates engaged in three tasks based around each of the following: a talk given to the teacher who made requests for clarification and who asked questions; a conversation with the teacher; and a role play with another candidate.

All these tasks were appropriate, although it would have been good to see evidence of a greater variety. The talks were not unlike the conversations, and the audience for both activities was the same. The talks could have been given to the other candidates who could have listened for, say, three or four minutes and who could then have turned the talks into conversations. The two types of activity could thus have been combined into one. The role play could have remained the same, or could have been another example of pair work, such as the preparation of an assignment. The third activity could have been a group discussion with three candidates at a time.

In coursework, it is a good idea to have as varied an audience as possible. In this case, assessments could have been made of all sorts of speaking and listening activities throughout the whole course.

The marking of the candidates was very accurate. These candidates spoke fluently and had a wide range of vocabulary upon which to call.