

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/11
Reading and Writing (Core)

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, reading comprehension, it is essential that candidates locate the key requirements of each question and answer with a brief and precise phrase.
- In **Exercise 2**, the multiple matching exercise, it is recommended that candidates practise skimming and scanning reading techniques and carefully consider each question, taking into account any distracting information in the texts. When writing their answer, candidates should clearly indicate the letter they have selected.
- In **Exercise 3**, note-taking, candidates need to ensure that their responses are brief and correspond to the heading of each question. Each line represents a separate point, and candidates should not repeat a point. Where a candidate includes two points on the same line, only the first is taken into consideration. Additionally, candidates should not add extra bullet points unless they have crossed through a previous response.
- In **Exercise 4**, summary writing, it is crucial that answers do not go beyond the required length, as Content points which are included after the stated word limit cannot be credited. Candidates should aim to provide six Content points and address exactly what is being asked in the question.
- In **Exercise 5**, email writing, responses must provide relevant information and be written in an informal style. All bullet points have to be addressed and developed in order to have access to marks in the top band for Content.
- In **Exercise 6**, candidates need to respond to the different requirements of this task, and they should adopt a style and register suited to an article, in contrast to the informal email in **Exercise 5**. Ideas should be relevant and developed at an appropriate length.

General comments

Overall, most candidates were correctly entered for the Core tier. A number of candidates achieved high marks, and for these candidates, the Extended tier paper might have been more suited to their linguistic ability. The majority of candidates were able to engage with the topics in the two final tasks and produce writing which achieved more than the minimum word length. Most candidates appeared to manage their time appropriately, with a small number omitting **Exercise 4**, **Exercise 6**, or individual items in **Exercises 1** and **3**.

A range of tasks was included in the paper, requiring candidates to demonstrate a variety of practical reading and writing skills. These ranged from selecting short relevant details from texts, a multiple matching task and a note-taking exercise, to the more challenging skills of summary writing and extended writing.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

There were a number of very good responses to the exercise as a whole. Less successful responses tended to include more information than required, which changed the meaning of the expected answer.

Question 1

This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. Some candidates misunderstood the phrasal verb 'find out about' in the question, and provided either Jennifer's opinion of her previous job, 'I was bored' or the sense of location, 'a fascinating environment'. The misspellings 'college' and 'collage' for 'colleague' could not be credited.

Question 2

This question proved more challenging for candidates. Many correctly identified the section of the text where the information was found, but a number of responses were too general, stating merely 'medical test', which without the central idea of 'passing' a medical test, could not be credited.

Question 3

Most candidates correctly responded to the question word 'When' and recognised that a time phrase was required. Others opted for the first-time phrase in the paragraph, 'February to December', which was the length of the winter, and which could not be credited.

Question 4

This question proved more challenging for candidates. In order to be successful, they needed to select 'the most difficult thing' about the job. There were many difficulties that Jennifer faced, 'the sea freezes', 'the nearest supermarket is 2000 miles away', 'the station is cut off from the outside world', but without reference to the 'biggest challenge', only 'working out how much food to order' corresponded to the demands of the question.

Question 5

This was well answered by the majority, who correctly selected the food 'to trade' as 'apples'. Responses which included more than one type of fruit were not credited.

Question 6

There was a good response to this question. Many candidates correctly provided the information that she was 'busy planning a menu'. Some candidates merely repeated the question in their answer, 'didn't remember to put them on' without giving a reason, and this was not credited. The central focus of the question was that she was 'busy', so without this key word, the response was not considered sufficiently precise.

Question 7

In this question, candidates were required to provide two pieces of advice for one mark each. The majority correctly identified the two ideas, 'exercise before getting into bed' and 'put your clothes in the bed the night before'. Less successful responses provided general information, 'do exercise' or incorrect information, 'put your clothes on the bed', and neither of these could be credited.

Question 8

This was very well answered by most candidates who recognised that Jennifer missed 'relaxing in a hot bath'. Responses which also included 'a shower' could not be credited.

Exercise 2

Question 9

Most candidates demonstrated a good level of understanding of the task and there were some very successful attempts at the exercise. Overall, the whole range of marks was awarded, with many candidates achieving more than five marks. Few candidates scored no marks, and a small number made no attempt at the exercise. The greatest number of correct answers was to **item (a)**, and the most commonly found wrong answers were **(b)** and **(f)**. It appeared that candidates may have found Text C the most accessible, as this was the most commonly used answer.

Presentation of answers was generally clear. When writing their answers, candidates are reminded that if they change their mind, they should not write the second answer over the first, but should cross out the wrong answer clearly, and write their final choice alongside.

Exercise 3

This exercise was well attempted, and many candidates answered suitably briefly and in note form. Many candidates showed sufficient understanding of the text and selected relevant information. Greater success in selecting correct details was achieved in **Question 11** than in **Questions 10** and **12**. A number of candidates scored full marks, and a few made no attempt to answer one or more questions in the exercise, particularly **Question 12**. Overall, the whole range of marks was awarded.

Question 10

How this newly discovered fish behaves differently from other 'walking fish'

There were three marks available for responses in this question and many candidates successfully achieved two key ideas, the most frequently selected being 'uses its four fins to walk', 'walks like a land animal' and 'climbs waterfalls using its body'. Less successful responses provided the detail that 'it jumps or slides forward using its tail', where more precise reading of the text would have indicated that this was the behaviour of 'other' walking fish. Other responses which included the fact that 'its bones were similar to land animals' could not be credited, as this answer described the fish, and did not provide information relating to 'behaviour', as the question demanded.

Question 11

What scientists might learn from the discovery of this new fish

Two marks were available for responses in this question and the majority of candidates scored well, the most frequently chosen answers being 'what life on Earth looked like 400 million years ago' and 'how living creatures first learned to walk'. A number of responses such as 'what Earth looked like...' or '400 million years' lacked precision and could not be credited. The details of 'why the fish moves in this unique way' and 'whether they are our earliest living ancestors' seemed to have been overlooked by the majority of candidates.

Question 12

Why it was difficult for scientists to study this new fish

All four key points for this question were recognised, with 'only 2000 exist' and 'not allowed to remove them from caves' being the most popular. Responses could not be credited when a key element was omitted, as in 'not allowed to remove them' or 'needed to obtain special permission'. Without the precise information that the fish were in 'caves' and permission was needed 'from the Thai government', such incomplete answers could not be credited. Candidates are reminded that their notes should correspond to the appropriate heading, as in this series there were many examples of answers to **Question 11** which were written in response to **Question 12**.

Exercise 4

Question 13

Many candidates found this exercise challenging. A significant number wrote beyond the 90 word limit, which in many cases affected the Content and Language marks. Candidates are advised to read the question carefully to ensure they provide information relevant to the task. In this series, candidates had to provide advice to potential visitors to the adventure park. Responses which also included non-essential information such as a description of Treetop World from the first paragraph of the text became unnecessarily long, which frequently led to correct Content points being written after the word limit which could not be credited. Information which does not address the specific requirements of the task or is simply copied from the text should be avoided.

In this series, there were a number of successful responses which demonstrated a good level of grammatical accuracy and the candidate's own words through the use of synonyms, re-structuring the grammar of sentences and linking ideas through the appropriate use of connecting words and phrases.

There were eight possible Content points, and many candidates achieved at least four, while a number scored full marks. Successful responses detailed the need to arrive earlier than the booked time in order to watch others already climbing. The need for safety of personal items was also highlighted, through phrases such as 'wear trousers with zip pockets to keep your belongings safe', and 'don't bring anything valuable to the park'. There were many good attempts at paraphrasing points 5 and 6, for example, 'pay attention to what your guide says' and 'ask for assistance if you need to'. For many candidates the last two Content points proved the most challenging to express in their own words, but there were some good attempts, such as 'wear clothes that you're happy to get dusty' and 'bring a suitable jacket in case it rains'. Less successful responses relied closely on repeating the text language, with additional connecting phrases such as 'also/in addition/but/finally'.

Language marks were awarded across the range, with the majority achieving three or four of the six marks available. Most summaries showed reasonable or good organisation. In general, candidates relied to a greater or lesser extent on the text language, connecting the ideas with a series of linking words. Such reliance placed the Language mark in the middle band. Responses in which large sections of the text were copied without any attempt at using the candidate's own words and those which were presented as a series of bullet points were limited to Language marks in the bottom band. To achieve higher marks for Language, candidates should attempt to express the ideas in their own words as far as possible. Although this appeared to be a challenge for a considerable number of candidates in this series, there were some successful summaries which were well organised, coherent and demonstrated a good level of accuracy throughout.

Exercise 5

Question 14

Email

There were many successful responses to the email writing exercise. Overall, responses showed a satisfactory sense of purpose and candidates attempted to develop the bullet points in a relevant way. More successful responses also showed an awareness of the target audience and adopted a style and register suited to an informal email. Responses which were simple narratives and lacked engagement with the reader were less successful and did not achieve high marks for Content. Development of ideas varied greatly. Some candidates said nothing about the competition other than the fact that they had won it, 'I won a competition', while others wrote every detail about the competition and dealt with bullet points 2 and 3 in a single sentence, 'I met a famous person and I felt happy'. This led to a sense of imbalance for the reader. Candidates are reminded to consider all bullet points when planning their response and include the appropriate amount of detail for each one.

There was a wide variety of responses to the first prompt: many successful attempts explained details of painting a picture of the famous person they hoped to meet, singing, writing a poem or designing a robot and included interesting original ideas. Less successful were the competitions which involved team sports, such as football or basketball competitions, where the whole team won. Similarly, responses which gave details of discovering a golden ticket in a chocolate bar, subscribing to a website or filling in an application form provided little opportunity for development and were less successful.

The second bullet point required candidates to describe their meeting with their chosen famous person, and popular famous people included football players, singers, actors and scientists. Other responses referred to 'a famous person' throughout. The most successful responses were those where a meeting was set up, often in a restaurant or cafe, and candidates described their feelings on meeting the person, such as 'immediately I froze and my heart started hammering', followed by further description of what took place during the meeting, 'she signed my book', 'we took a selfie', 'he talked about his life', 'he said how much he liked my poem'. Less successful were the responses which merely mentioned that the famous person gave out the competition prize and shook hands. Without further development, these could not be credited with marks in the top band for Content.

For the third bullet point, candidates were asked to say how they felt after the meeting, and a number of candidates used this to express how the meeting had affected their way of thinking, given them direction in their lives, or had given them a confidence boost. In many answers this bullet point consisted of a single sentence, 'I felt over the moon'. Candidates are reminded once again to attempt to provide some development to the last point in order to have access to marks in the top band for Content.

In terms of language, stronger candidates were able to personalise their writing effectively, as in ‘you know me so well’, ‘I know you’re thinking’, ‘as you know’. Many candidates took the opportunity to demonstrate good descriptive phrases, ‘nut brown eyes’, ‘wavy hair’, ‘sparkling smile’. Although most candidates used simple tense construction and common vocabulary, there were some attempts at more complex structures and less common vocabulary, for example ‘Not only did she look more beautiful than she does on TV, (even though she looks good there too)...’ and ‘He highlighted my strengths and weaknesses and things I needed to work on, but most importantly, he motivated me...’, ‘I felt truly inspired and ready to do my best.’ Basic punctuation using full stops and commas was generally accurate, and the majority of candidates used paragraphs to provide effective structure and organisation to their writing. The misuse of articles before adjectives and nouns was regularly seen, as in ‘an great opportunity’, and commonly ‘comption/competition’ for ‘competition’. Improved accuracy in spelling would advantage the Language mark.

Exercise 6

Question 15

Article

In this series, candidates were required to write an article, discussing whether all candidates should have music lessons at school. The topic appeared to be of personal interest to many candidates who showed their true feelings and opinions in their writing. Less successful responses moved away from the topic of music lessons in school to the broader discussion of the place of music in our lives, which could not be credited with marks in the top band for Content. Candidates are reminded to pay particular attention to the rubric and context of the task, and to write relevantly.

All four written prompts were widely used, and opinions were divided. Stronger responses developed on one side the benefits of music to candidates’ creativity and personal development, ‘it gives you a chance to be as creative as you can’, ‘music helps candidates to open up – to be more honest’, ‘it’s the only class you can be yourself in’. Further ideas suggested that music lessons would provide a welcome break from the stresses of other more difficult subjects. On the other side, the argument focused on the fact that music lessons might be divisive and separate the musically talented from those who have no musical knowledge. Many felt that music lessons would take the time from other more important subjects, but this was frequently counterbalanced by the idea that music can improve learning in other subjects too. Overall, the general consensus was that music lessons should be optional during the school day, with non-musical candidates able to benefit from extra study during this time, or they should be part of an after-school programme or private lesson. Less successful responses were characterised by a heavy reliance on the written prompts, and without further development of ideas and opinions could not achieve marks in the top band for Content.

From a language point of view, some candidates took the opportunity to include a range of vocabulary on the topic, for example ‘melody, instruments, tunes, guitar, violin’, but generally, candidates are encouraged to increase their topic-related vocabulary resources to achieve marks in the top band for Language. Stronger answers also included a variety of often accurate compound and complex sentences which merited high marks. Candidates are encouraged to focus on greater accuracy of tenses in compound and complex sentences. It was noted in this series that some candidates attempted to achieve a very formal register in their introduction and conclusion, and in doing so produced unnatural sounding language, such as ‘for eons a heated controversy has ignited the debate...’. Such pre-learned phrases can distract from the focus of the task and may obscure meaning. Overall, many responses were organised effectively into paragraphs and ideas were separated through the use of connecting phrases such as ‘on the contrary’ and ‘taking into account’. Basic punctuation was generally accurate.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/21
Reading and Writing (Extended)

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, reading comprehension, close reading is required to identify the key point of each question. Candidates are reminded that answers should be brief to avoid the inclusion of superfluous information which could negate the answer.
- In **Exercise 2**, the multiple matching exercise, candidates should practise skimming and scanning reading techniques and carefully consider each question, taking into account any distracting information in the texts.
- In **Exercise 3**, note-taking, it is important that responses are suitably brief and correspond to the headings of each section. Candidates should be guided by the number of bullet points which indicate the number of responses required. There should be only one relevant note per bullet point as if candidates provide more than one, only the first one can be credited.
- In **Exercise 4**, candidates need to read the question carefully to ensure they provide information relevant to the task. They should also ensure that they do not exceed the 120-word limit. Overlong introductions should be avoided as well as the inclusion of irrelevant information or repetition of points.
- In **Exercises 5 and 6**, responses need to be of an appropriate length, demonstrating imaginative content and a range of language. To achieve marks in the higher bands, it is important for candidates to introduce independent, well-developed ideas in both tasks. Candidates will not be given credit for using language which has simply been copied from the prompts.
- In **Exercise 5**, email writing, candidates are reminded to use an informal register and to address and develop all three bullet prompts. In **Exercise 6**, a more formal register is required and candidates should use persuasive language to convince the reader of their opinions.

General comments

Overall, candidates were correctly entered at this level.

The paper offered a range of tasks within the six exercises, requiring the candidates to demonstrate a variety of practical skills.

Candidates are reminded that throughout the paper, the spaces and number of lines are arranged to guide them as to the length of answer required and they should not consistently exceed this. They also need to indicate clearly where extra work has been added.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

This exercise was well attempted, and many candidates selected key details and provided brief and precise responses. Others copied a large amount of text which often changed the meaning of the correct answer.

- (1) This was well answered, often with the single word 'colleague'. Some candidates only mentioned 'an advert' and could not be credited.
- (2) This was generally well attempted. Answers which referred only to the 'medical task' without the idea of 'passing' were incomplete and could not be credited.
- (3) This was very well answered with only a small number of candidates choosing the distractor 'February to December' in the text.
- (4) This was well attempted, although occasionally candidates overlooked the wording 'that's not as big a problem' in the text and wrote 'can't pop out to the supermarket'.
- (5) This was very well answered.
- (6) This proved to be a more challenging question. Some candidates answered 'she just didn't remember to put them on', which was simply a repetition of the question. Answers which omitted the key word 'busy' and the misspelling 'planing' were also not credited.
- (7) This was a two-mark question and was generally well attempted. A small number of candidates wrote simply 'do some exercise', omitting the key detail 'before getting into bed' and could therefore not be credited. Also, the misspelling of 'cloths' for 'clothes' could not be credited.
- (8) This was very successfully answered.
- (9) The final question in this exercise is always more challenging, and candidates should be prepared to review the stimulus article as a whole because key information may appear anywhere in the text.

Overall, this question was well answered. Most candidates understood the task and attempted to supply answers about what Jennifer liked about living and working in Antarctica. The most successful answers conveyed full details for each point. For example, for the first point on the mark scheme, 'the colours of the landscape' was an essential detail and not just 'the landscape'. Similarly, for the second point, there had to be a reference to 'make them feel better' and not just the 'preparing meals' idea. For the final point, a number of candidates wrote 'not much to spend her salary on', which was not what Jennifer liked about life in Antarctica. There had to be a reference to 'saving money' as this was the key detail.

Exercise 2

This was a multiple matching exercise where candidates had to match details from four texts with letters **A–D** on the question page. Overall, this new type of question was well answered.

Candidates are advised to read each question **(a)–(j)** carefully and note the key words. They should then look for synonyms or expressions in the text which convey the same idea and write the corresponding letter in the space provided.

This task consisted of reviews of four websites that teach people to play the guitar. Correct and incorrect answers were spread evenly throughout the task, but many candidates found questions **(f)** and **(g)** the most challenging. In **(f)**, the key words in the question were 'the teacher's personality'. This should have directed the candidates' attention towards text C which comments on 'the enthusiasm shown by tutor Jerry'. Many candidates selected text B which described Paul Henson as 'a great tutor', but this did not relate to his personality. In **(g)**, the key words in the question were 'appropriate amount', which linked to text A and the phrase 'they don't try to include too much at once'.

Candidates are reminded that the letters **A–D** should be very clearly written and if they change their mind about an answer, they should clearly cross out the original letter and re-write it. Candidates should avoid overwriting their original answer.

Exercise 3

This exercise proved to be a good discriminator with a range of marks awarded. Most candidates attempted to answer briefly and in note form. The most successful responses showed good understanding of the precise detail in the text. Some candidates omitted key words in certain answers, meaning that those notes were either incomplete or factually incorrect. It is essential that responses follow on from the wording in the heading of the question.

How this newly discovered fish behaves differently from other 'walking fish'

A maximum of three marks was available for this question and most candidates conveyed the first and third points on the mark scheme. On occasion, answers could not be credited because candidates omitted the key detail of 'waterfalls'. The second point on the mark scheme was less well recognised and in the final point, the essential detail of 'as it walks' was often omitted from the answer. Less successful answers omitted essential detail such as the use of suitable verbs at the start of each answer.

What scientists might learn from the discovery of the new fish

A maximum of three marks was available for this question, which was generally well answered. Most candidates selected points two and three on the mark scheme, and some also recognised the more difficult points one and four. Some candidates needed to be more precise with the wording of point two as they wrote 'what Earth looked like 400 million years ago' without reference to 'life on Earth'. This omission changed the meaning and the answer could not be credited. Some candidates appeared to be imprecise with their reading of the question heading and selected incorrect detail such as 'working in international teams can bring great research results', which had no connection to the idea of new fish.

Why it was difficult for scientists to study this new fish

A maximum of three marks was available for this question. Most candidates scored well here and provided full details for each point. Some candidates omitted key words, in particular 'only' from points one and two. Without this key word, the answers 'found in eight caves' and '2000 exist' did not follow the wording in the heading. Similarly, in point four, the answer required the verb 'needed' to be complete and factually accurate.

Exercise 4

The summary proved to be a very good discriminating exercise and there was a full range of marks awarded for both Content and Language. There were two aspects to this task and candidates needed to convey key details about how to improve your intelligence and how to appear more intelligent to other people. All of the ten Content points covering both aspects proved accessible, although points five and six on the mark scheme were not well recognised. The most successful responses developed the two aspects individually and either used two paragraphs to separate them or selected appropriate expressions such as 'on the other hand' to make a clear distinction for the reader. Candidates who were awarded with the highest marks for Content read the question carefully, organising and addressing the key points sequentially from the text. Very few candidates only covered one aspect of the task.

Many candidates exceeded the 120-word limit. This was largely due to writing overlong introductions, which included copying large amounts of detail from the beginning of the text. Many summaries started with the wording 'There is a popular belief that...' and continued with irrelevant detail from the second paragraph. Similarly, some candidates did not seem selective enough and wrote a description of 'fluid intelligence', which did not address either aspect of the question. Candidates are reminded that there may be whole sections of text which are not relevant when writing the summary and that careful reading of the wording in the rubric is essential.

There were some candidates who seemed to have confused certain details from the two different aspects. This was most evident in point three on the mark scheme where they included the detail about the change of clothing or the wearing of the white coat as how to appear more intelligent, rather than how to improve intelligence.

Some candidates also copied large pieces of text without discrimination. For example, including all the options under point two on the mark scheme about exercise, diet and running was repetitive and a precise selection of just one option would have enabled more Content points. In addition, candidates could not be credited for the wording 'a number of puzzles' rather than 'number puzzles' and not linking the idea of 'complex new material' with 'technology'.

With regard to Language, higher marks are available for those candidates who make an attempt to paraphrase certain words and expressions. Many candidates expressed key details in their own words without losing accuracy or meaning. For example, 'do something that you are not good at' became 'move outside your comfort zone' and 'pick one subject and go into it in depth' became 'study one topic deeply'.

More successful answers also included appropriate conjunctions, which gave the summary a natural flow. They conveyed the relevant Content points with good style rather than in the form of a list. Others used an incorrect, informal register with expressions such as 'What do you think?' and 'It's a good idea, isn't it?'.

Exercise 5

Email to a friend about a competition that you won to meet a famous person

In this exercise, to achieve the higher bands on the grade criteria for Content, candidates are reminded to address and develop all three bullet prompts, and that their writing should convey a good sense of purpose. Many candidates wrote a suitably brief introduction and concluding statement in an informal register, but others were not as concise. Prolonged greetings and conclusions, which are often pre-learnt set expressions and not always relevant, should be avoided. Some candidates used a large number of words at the start and finish of the piece which would be better employed developing the requirements of the bullet points.

For the first bullet point, candidates needed to explain what they had to do to win the competition. There were many varied ideas such as writing articles on environmental projects, designing video games, writing and delivering a speech, or winning swimming or chess competitions.

The second bullet point required candidates to describe their meeting with the famous person. There was often a link between the content of the competition and the chosen celebrity, many of whom were local and well-known within the candidate's own country. Others were globally famous. The most successful responses included factual detail of where the meeting took place, special surprises that the famous person had arranged and the topics of conversation. Overall, the register was positive although there were a few candidates who were disappointed with the meeting and thought that the famous person was horrible, which made for an interesting alternative approach to the second bullet point. There was a small number of candidates who referred throughout to 'the famous person' without ever giving them a name and this created a disconnected and impersonal feel to the whole piece.

The third bullet point required candidates to say how they felt after meeting the famous person. More successful responses included new ideas and details to describe the candidates' feelings. It is important that candidates address the final bullet point fully and do not simply repeat details that have been covered earlier in the piece.

In terms of Language, most candidates used suitable paragraphing to give balance to their writing, although there was a number of candidates who wrote one continuous piece without any capital letters or full stops. Overall, basic punctuation was generally sound and spelling was of a good standard. The most successful answers used ambitious and sophisticated vocabulary and expressions in their piece, for example 'his accent was a bit challenging to decode', 'I had to wow the judges', 'I was truly humbled' and 'I was on tenterhooks'. Other responses needed a wider range of vocabulary as they were a succession of very short, simple sentences which would have been greatly improved by the use of subordinate clauses.

The most successful answers adopted a suitable register, using an appropriately informal tone and addressing the recipient of the email throughout. They were able to express great surprise at winning the competition, excitement at meeting the famous person and euphoria after the meeting. Other candidates did not refer to or involve the recipient of the email and wrote the piece in the form of a story, with too much

detail about what they had to do to win the competition. This overemphasis on the first bullet point often resulted in too little coverage of the second and third bullet points, which affected the mark awarded for Content.

This extended writing task requires candidates to be competent in using a range of verb constructions, in particular past and present tenses. There was some mixing of these tenses as well as non-agreement of subject and verb and these affected the mark that could be awarded for Language.

Exercise 6

Article about whether it is important for all students to have music lessons at school

Generally, articles were of a suitable length and most candidates were able to adopt a formal tone and register. A number of candidates tended to stay very close to the two prompts with little development or independent contribution. The best responses included a clear and well-supported argument together with judicious use of linking words and paragraphing. In order to gain access to the higher mark bands, candidates are advised to try and persuade the reader of their own convictions and opinions.

Many candidates seem to feel that they have to invent titles as a heading for the article, which might help them to focus their ideas, but in fact, many supply their own version which does not match the rubric. As a result, the content is not always focused correctly and tends to follow the direction chosen by the candidate, rather than the specific requirements of the topic. Candidates need to read the rubric carefully and address the statement rather than create their own question.

The most successful answers argued convincingly with a range of ideas that went beyond the two prompts, and candidates supported their opinions and developed them, rather than just listing disconnected points. Many candidates wrote a balanced piece and kept the content within the context of school and music lessons. Some argued that music was sufficiently different from other subjects and therefore allowed for a degree of relaxation, enabling them to escape the stress of school life for a short time. Candidates also wrote about the different skills that a music lesson offers such as building up relationships by working in groups.

On the other side of the argument, many candidates took the view that the subject had no real value in the school curriculum and wasted time which could be better spent with extra work on subjects that had more importance. Some argued that its lack of status meant that many students did not take it seriously and that as a result there were behavioural problems within the class.

Less successful responses remained close to the two basic ideas expressed in the rubric prompts with limited development. There were many who wrote solely about listening to music or music per se with little or no specific reference to school music lessons in the rubric title. This approach was not focused enough and did not effectively address the task. There were also some candidates who included irrelevant material about their own school situation and wrote at length about how music would or would not fit into their class timetable. There were also often conflicting opinions for and against the topic within the same paragraph.

More successful answers included a final paragraph, where candidates were able to summarise their arguments clearly, often adding a new dimension. Others repeated previous points and re-stated broad opinions that they had made in the body of the article, often using the same words. Overall, many candidates achieved a good balance to the writing through attempts to provide an introductory comment on the topic and a concluding opinion.

In terms of Language, most candidates wrote in the correct register, demonstrating a more formal style than in **Exercise 5**, with expressions such as 'artistic perspective', 'hidden potential', 'spontaneity of expression' and 'restoration of focus'. Some candidates achieved some variety of style, often opening with a forceful statement or persuasive technique such as a rhetorical question, for example, 'Do you really believe that we will be happy with the added burden of this subject?'

More successful responses also included linking words, for example, 'in a nutshell', 'in the same vein' and 'another point to consider' to good effect, which made the piece flow more easily when different points of view were offered. As with **Exercise 5**, some candidates did not observe paragraphing conventions and some wrote one continuous piece. Some also provided an overlong introduction, full of pre-learnt set phrases which had little meaning other than to state that there were arguments for and against. These phrases tended to consist of old-fashioned, inaccurately formed idioms which were out of place in a modern text.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/31
Listening (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates need to be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear. Where handwriting cannot be read, no marks can be awarded.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the rubric carefully for each question on the paper. This is particularly important where a word limit must be adhered to. This applies to **Exercises 1** and **2**.
- Candidates should be made aware of distracting information in listening texts and practise listening for specific detail which is required as the intended answer.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g. how, why, when, and the key words in the question. In most cases, short, direct responses are most successful. Responses must also stay within the word limits as stated in the main rubric for each applicable section.
- In the gap-filling exercise (i.e. **Exercise 2**), candidates should be encouraged to predict the answers in the gaps. At the end of each section, candidates should also check their responses carefully to make sure they fit grammatically and are within the word limit.
- In **Exercises 2**, candidates should be reminded not to include words that are printed in the statements on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.
- In **Exercises 2**, it is advisable for candidates to practise using the framework provided by the gapped statements, to guide themselves through the audio text. This technique will help candidates locate the required missing detail and ensure that this detail is inserted in the appropriate gap.
- In the matching speakers question (**Exercise 3**) and the multiple choice questions (**Exercise 4**), candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which answer they wish to be taken as their final selection by Examiners.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates need to be reminded to use each letter only once.
- Candidates' awareness should be raised of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns and prepositions as these can alter the key meaning.
- When making phonetic attempts, it is recommended that candidates try to mimic the number of syllables in the word that has been heard and also to try to re-create the vowel and consonant sounds accurately. However, phonetic attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. sea/see, weak/week etc.).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to learners. Learners should also be made aware of the importance of transcribing voiced and unvoiced consonants accurately as these may change meaning (e.g. s/z as in 'prices' and 'prizes').
- Some questions involve transcribing numbers and these should therefore be practised. For example, it is useful to help candidates to distinguish between the pronunciation of eighty and eighteen. Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing larger numbers correctly and the standard form of abbreviations of common units (e.g. 'min' for minutes, 'km' for kilometres, etc.).

- Learners should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail, etc.) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks, etc.).

General comments

- Candidates were required to use a set number of words for **Exercises 1** and **2**. A large number of candidates could not be credited as they exceeded the required number of words.
- Successful responses were those which provided short, clear answers and which adhered to the word limit required.
- Candidates should be reminded that no two questions will have the same answer.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1-4

Overall this section was well answered. There were few omissions but responses could not be credited when the word limit was exceeded.

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates identified the correct response: 'volcano'. There was a wide variety of spelling variants that could be credited but some candidates gave the distractors e.g. 'castle', 'beach' and 'island'.
- (b) This was very well answered by the vast majority of candidates. However, many candidates wrote 'brother', 'brother and sister' and some candidates included 'nephew' in their answer.

Question 2

- (a) This was very well attempted and a large number of candidates were able to score a mark as a wide variety of spelling variants could be credited. Quite a few candidates selected 'main hall' as their answer.
- (b) There was a mixed response here with several weaker responses including the wrong figure. If a symbol was provided, the £ sign was usually correctly transcribed. Sometimes no symbol was provided. A few candidates wrote an incorrect currency sign e.g. € or \$. Many candidates wrote '£4.50' and some wrote '4 pounds 20 cents'.

Question 3

- (a) This was quite well attempted as there were many acceptable spellings. The most common error was 'money exchange' or 'managing money'. Weaker responses included 'financial planning' or 'financial change'.
- (b) This was generally well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The following responses could not be credited: 'office and email', 'email the office' and 'take email'.

Question 4

- (a) This question was really well answered with a wide range of recognizable attempts at spelling 'title'. Some responses that could not be credited were 'tyte', 'tattle' and 'tight'. Some chose to give the distractor 'plot'.
- (b) This question was generally well answered. However, some candidates added extra detail which negated the mark e.g. 'near the garden'. Many candidates went for the distractor 'desk'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'in the cold', 'at office' and 'at home'.

Question 5

Large parts of this question were answered well by a lot of candidates. Responses containing repetition of words, either preceding or following the gap, were not credited as they lead to an incorrect grammatical fit. In some cases, wrong singular and plural nouns meant that candidates could not be credited. Some parts of the question were left blank by a few candidates.

- (i) This question was well attempted and most candidates gained a mark due to the very wide range of accepted spellings. Weaker candidates wrote '30th June'.
- (ii) This was consistently well answered by the majority of candidates. Some of the incorrect responses were 'lives', 'lifes' and 'laves'.
- (iii) On the whole, this question was quite well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Many candidates wrote 'wood' or 'wooden' and lost the mark. Other incorrect answers were 'weapons and sticks', 'stacks' and 'steaks'.
- (iv) There was a mixed level of success here. The answers were fairly evenly divided between the expected 'wool' and various distractors. Some of the incorrect responses were 'whole', 'human hair', 'wood' and 'fibres'.
- (v) This was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates. Weaker candidates sometimes used the plural form 'stones' and consequently lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'stand', 'stove', 'goods' and 'tobacco'.
- (vi) This was consistently well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. However, some candidates wrote the singular 'bone' and lost the mark. The following responses could not be credited: 'x-ray art', 'barns' and 'bands'.
- (vii) There was a mixed level of success. Many candidates gave a partial answer with 'sand' only. Other incorrect answers were 'cultures' and 'figures'.
- (viii) This was extremely well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some of the incorrect responses were 'visa', 'Austrian passport', 'pass boat' and 'pass board'.

Question 6

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and obtained full marks.

A few candidates used the same letter more than once. In this case, no marks were awarded. Candidates need to ensure that they cross out inaccurate responses clearly to avoid the duplication of letters for each response.

Question 7

Generally, candidates responded very well to this question.

A few candidates failed to clarify their final response, thus giving two answers. It should be noted that if a candidate changes their mind about their original intended response, they should clearly cross out their first answer. There should be no ambiguity regarding which answer is intended as the candidate's definitive response.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/41
Listening (Extended)

Key messages

- Candidates should be encouraged to read the rubric carefully for each question on the paper. This is particularly important where a word limit must be adhered to. This applies to **Exercises 1, 2 and 5**.
- Candidates should be made aware of distracting information in listening texts and practise listening for the specific details required.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g. how, why, when, and the key words in the question. In most cases, short, direct responses are most successful. Responses must also stay within the word limits as stated in the main rubric for each applicable section.
- In the gap-filling exercises (i.e. **Exercises 2 and 5**), candidates should be encouraged to predict the answers in the gaps. At the end of each section, candidates should also check their responses carefully to make sure they fit grammatically and are within the word limit.
- In **Exercises 2 and 5**, candidates should be reminded not to include words that are printed in the statements on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.
- In **Exercises 2 and 5**, it is advisable for candidates to practise using the framework provided by the gapped statements, to guide themselves through the audio text. This technique will help candidates locate the required missing detail and ensure that this detail is inserted in the appropriate gap.
- In the matching speakers question (**Exercise 3**) and the multiple choice questions (**Exercise 4**), candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which answer they wish to be taken as their final selection by Examiners.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates need to be reminded to use each letter only once.
- Candidates' awareness should be raised of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns and prepositions as these can alter the key meaning.
- When making phonetic attempts, it is recommended that candidates try to mimic the number of syllables in the word that has been heard and also to try to re-create the vowel and consonant sounds accurately. However, phonetic attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. sea/see, weak/week etc.).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to learners. Learners should also be made aware of the importance of transcribing voiced and unvoiced consonants accurately as these may change meaning (e.g. s/z as in 'prices' and 'prizes').
- Some questions involve transcribing numbers and these should therefore be practised. For example, it is useful to help candidates to distinguish between the pronunciation of eighty and eighteen. Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing larger numbers correctly and the standard form of abbreviations of common units (e.g. 'min' for minutes, 'km' for kilometres, etc.).
- Learners should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail, etc.) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks, etc.).

General comments

Candidates were required to use a set number of words for **Exercises 1, 2 and 5**. A large number of candidates who made correct responses could not be credited as they exceeded the required number of words. Successful responses were those which provided short, clear answers and which adhered to the word limit required. Candidates should be reminded that the answer will be heard; they must not make up an answer. Similarly, candidates would do well to remember that no two questions will have the same answer.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Overall this section was well answered. There were few omissions but responses could not be credited when more than the required words were written.

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates identified the correct response 'volcano'. There was a wide variety of spelling variants that could be credited but some candidates went for the distractors e.g. 'castle', 'beach' and 'island'.
- (b) This was very well answered by the vast majority of candidates. However, many candidates wrote 'brother', 'brother and sister' and some candidates included 'nephew' in their answer.

Question 2

- (a) This was very well attempted and a large number of candidates were able to score a mark as a wide variety of spelling variants could be credited. Quite a few candidates selected 'main hall' as their answer.
- (b) There was a very mixed response here with weaker candidates choosing the wrong figure. If a symbol was provided, the £ sign was usually correctly transcribed. Sometimes no symbol was provided. Occasionally candidates wrote an incorrect currency sign e.g. € or \$. Many candidates wrote '£4.50' and some wrote '4 pounds 20 cents'.

Question 3

- (a) This was quite well attempted as there were many acceptable spellings. The most common error was 'money exchange' or 'managing money'. Many weaker candidates wrote 'financial planning' or 'financial change'.
- (b) This was generally well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The following responses could not be credited: 'office and email', 'email the office' and 'take email'.

Question 4

- (a) This question was really well answered with a wide range of recognizable attempts at spelling 'title'. Some responses that could not be credited were 'tyte', 'tattle' and 'tight'. Weaker candidates often gave the distractor 'plot'.
- (b) This question was generally well answered. However, some candidates added extra detail which negated the mark e.g. 'near the garden'. Many weaker candidates went for the distractor 'desk'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'in the cold', 'at office' and 'at home'.

Exercise 2

Question 5

Large parts of this question were answered well by a lot of candidates. Responses containing repetition of words, either preceding or following the gap, were not credited as they lead to an incorrect grammatical fit. In some cases, wrong singular and plural nouns meant that candidates could not be credited. Some parts of the question were left blank by a few candidates.

- (i) This question was well attempted and most candidates gained a mark due to the very wide range of accepted spellings. Weaker candidates wrote '30th June'.
- (ii) This was consistently well answered by the majority of candidates. Some of the incorrect responses were 'lives', 'lifes' and 'laves'.

- (iii) On the whole, this question was quite well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates wrote 'wood' or 'wooden' and lost the mark. Other incorrect answers were 'weapons and sticks', 'stacks' and 'steaks'
- (iv) There was a mixed level of success here. The answers were fairly evenly divided between the expected 'wool' and various distractors. Some of the incorrect responses were 'whole', 'human hair', 'wood' and 'fibres'.
- (v) This was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates. Weaker candidates sometimes used the plural form 'stones' and consequently lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'stand', 'stove', 'goods' and 'tobacco'.
- (vi) This was consistently well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. However, some candidates wrote the singular 'bone' and lost the mark. The following responses could not be credited: 'x-ray art', 'barns' and 'bands'.
- (vii) There was a mixed level of success. Many candidates gave a partial answer with 'sand' only. Other incorrect answers were 'cultures' and 'figures'.
- (viii) This was extremely well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some of the incorrect responses were 'visa', 'Austrian passport', 'pass boat' and 'pass board'.

Exercise 3

Question 6

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and obtained full marks.

A few candidates used the same letter more than once. In this case, no marks were awarded even if one of those letters was the correct response in the intended box. Candidates need to ensure that they cross out inaccurate responses clearly to avoid the duplication of letters for each response.

Exercise 4

Question 7

Generally, candidates responded very well to this question.

A few candidates failed to clarify their final response, thus giving two answers. It should be noted that if a candidate changes their mind about their original intended response, they should clearly cross out their first answer. There should be absolutely no ambiguity regarding which answer is intended as the candidate's definitive response.

Exercise 5

Question 8

There was a mixed response to this question. Some responses provided were not always a grammatical fit and incorrect singular and plural nouns meant that some candidates could not be credited. There were a few questions that were not attempted by some candidates.

Part A

- (i) There was a mixed level of success here. Distractors were presented as much as the expected answers. The common errors were 'studies', 'funding' and 'researchers'.
- (ii) This was quite well answered by most candidates. Some candidates wrote 'housework', 'classwork' and 'reading' which were not creditworthy.
- (iii) This question was generally well answered due to the wide range of accepted answers. Some answers that did not score a mark were 'creativity', 'length', 'study' and 'homework'.

- (iv) This proved a very challenging question for a large number of candidates; amongst the incorrect responses were 'imagination', 'concrete' and 'children'.
- (v) There was a very mixed level of success here. Distractors were selected as much as the expected response. Some of the incorrect responses were 'patterns', 'circumstances', 'software' and 'behaviour'. Some of the incorrect spellings were 'overstatin' and 'obertation'.

Part B

- (i) This was generally well answered and there was a wide range of recognisable attempts at the correct response. However, the following attempts could not be credited: 'not permanent', 'toys' and 'temporary'.
- (ii) This was generally well answered and there was a wide range of recognisable attempts at the correct response. The most common errors were 'attention', 'tension', 'intense' and 'consequences'.
- (iii) There was a very mixed level of success here. Many candidates picked out the distractors and some responses had nothing to do with the question e.g. 'constipation', 'consolation', 'cancellation' and 'conversation'.
- (iv) This question was generally well attempted and the vast majority of candidates offered the correct spelling. However, 'upstruct' and 'psychological' could not be credited.
- (v) This question was quite well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. However, the following could not be accepted: 'compacity', 'language' and 'improve'.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/51
Speaking

Key messages

- Overall, tests have been conducted well by Centres.
- Teachers and Examiners are strongly advised to read the Moderation Report sent to their Centre.
- Teachers are encouraged to read the 369427 Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language Learner Guide (Cambridge Secondary 2) for advice on how to prepare candidates for the test.
- In Centres where one or more Examiner has conducted the test, internal moderation is mandatory, in order to ensure consistency. Centres should refer to the fact sheet on Internally Assessed Speaking Tests from Cambridge International for guidance on how to do this.
- Candidates must not bring mobile phones, smart watches or any other electronic devices into the Examination room.
- Centres must check the quality of audio recordings before sending them to Cambridge.
- Examiners are required to read out Part **A** verbatim.
- Examiners are required to follow the timings and instructions stated in Part **A** regarding the conduct of the test. Examiners should choose an appropriate assessment card for the candidate from Part **B**.
- Candidates are strongly encouraged to use the full amount of time for Part **C** and to seek clarification if necessary, so that they are fully prepared for Part **D**.
- Examiners need to paraphrase difficult vocabulary and phrases more simply when asked. Repeating the phrase on the card does not always help candidates understand the idea expressed in the prompt.
- Examiners should seek to engage candidates in a two-way conversation from the outset in Part **D**.
- Examiners are advised to use more supplementary questions to elicit fuller responses from candidates in part **D** of the test.
- Candidates who performed well supported their answers with examples or personal anecdotes.

General comments

Part A

Most Examiners read the script provided verbatim, as instructed. However, a few Examiners are paraphrasing, often omitting important information in the process. Some Examiners did not inform candidates that they could keep the card until the end of the test, for example. Part **A** was occasionally omitted.

Part B

This part was frequently too short and occasionally too long. Most Examiners are making efforts to put candidates at ease by being friendly and positive. Good Examiners often start by asking candidates what they like to do in their free time. Some Examiners introduce assessment card topics into the warm up as a way of identifying a suitable card for the candidate to the detriment of the development of a more natural conversation.

Part C

Nearly all Examiners announced the assessment card. In many cases, the choice of assessment card for a candidate seems arbitrary. Some preparation periods were too short with Examiners allowing candidates to proceed or asking candidates if they were ready before 2 minutes had passed. Examiners should ensure that candidates spent at least 2 minutes preparing. Some Examiners are taking too long to choose an assessment card between the end of Part **B** and the start of Part **C**. Examiners should be familiar with the cards to the extent that they are able to hand the selected card to the candidate almost immediately.

Part D

Overall, Examiners conducted this part well, using open-ended questions – giving candidates the opportunity to provide longer responses – and generally encouraging candidates to perform to the best of their ability. However, some Examiners asked the prompts as questions, and made minimal efforts to develop the conversation, while others allowed candidates to simply work their way through the prompts without seeking to engage the candidate in a two-way discussion. In this series, more candidates asked the Examiner questions as part of the discussion. This is good practice but it should not result in too much talking time from Examiners. Timings were generally accurate, although sometimes too short, particularly with weaker candidates, and on occasion too long.

Application of the marking criteria

A number of Centres – more than in previous years – applied the mark scheme too severely, across the criteria. In such cases, scaling was applied. Examiners are reminded that native speaker proficiency is not required in order for maximum marks to be awarded.

Structure – Some Centres showed a tendency towards severity and a seeming reluctance to award top marks. One example of such severity was too great a focus on minor slips which did not impair communication. Occasionally, scores on Structure were too severe where candidates were quiet or seemed to lack confidence. Some Examiners rewarded control of structure over and above range of structure.

Vocabulary – This assessment criterion was generally applied accurately, although again a trend towards severity did emerge. Candidates who used a range of vocabulary to express emotions and reactions achieved high marks. While expressions such as ‘kind of’, ‘cool’ and the use of ‘like’ as an interjection (‘it’s, like, really nice’) can be useful discourse markers for candidates and will not impact negatively on their marks; such expressions are unlikely to yield a high score on Vocabulary. Examiners should reward ambitious candidates who are clearly attempting complexity, albeit unsuccessfully.

Development and Fluency – There was a tendency towards slight severity on this criterion. Candidates who deliberate and take time to choose more sophisticated vocabulary and to include a range of structures, are often being marked too severely in Centres where ‘fluent’ is understood to mean ‘fast’. In Centres where the standard is particularly high, it is possible that *all* candidates could achieve the highest mark, even though some may be noticeably stronger – effectively performing above the highest mark – than others. On the other hand, there were instances of some candidates being generously marked where they spoke at length, despite a lack of focus to their response.

Administration

Recordings – Recordings were of an acceptable quality though in some cases background noise is evident. This could be distracting for candidates. Some audio tracks were not labelled with the candidate’s name and number. There were a few instances of blank, unplayable CDs or recordings of poor quality.

Sampling – Most Centres provided the correct number of samples across the range of marks and Examiners. However, sampling is occasionally unrepresentative of the full range of marks and in these cases it is usually the highest or lowest scoring candidate who is not included in the sample.

Documentation – This is generally good with fewer clerical errors than previously. Centres are reminded to enter candidates in numerical order on the summary forms and asterisk those that are part of the sample.

Internal moderation after the speaking tests

Centres are reminded that where more than one Examiner is used at a Centre, internal moderation is mandatory. Where internal moderation was carried out during this Series, guidelines supplied by Cambridge International as to how to conduct it, were often not adhered to.

Each Examiner should list their candidates in descending order of marks (in ‘rank order’) so that the candidate with the highest mark appears at the top of the list, and the candidate with the lowest mark appears at the bottom of the list.

The lead Examiner should review the marks of each Examiner. To do this, the lead Examiner is required to listen to a range of candidates (top, middle, and bottom scoring) from each Examiner, identifying if there are points on the mark range where adjustments are required. This will produce a consistent rank order of

candidates across all Examiners within a Centre. If no adjustments are required to an Examiner's marks, these are the final total marks that should be submitted to Cambridge International. If an adjustment to an Examiner's marks is required, the lead Examiner should make this adjustment to all of the marks given by that Examiner in that mark range. The adjusted marks are the final total marks which should be submitted to Cambridge International.

The lead Examiner should record the final total marks for all candidates in the final column of the working mark sheet or oral examination summary form. They should submit these marks to Cambridge International according to the instructions set out in the Cambridge Handbook.

Comments on Specific Assessment Cards

A – National monuments

This card was not frequently chosen. Strong responses were those where references were made to a specific visit, and to the emotions experienced by the candidate. Candidates who had travelled widely answered this well, although some candidates simply listed rather than described monuments. Prompt 2 asks for differences between visiting a monument and seeing it in pictures, so comparatives such as 'it was much bigger than I imagined' were helpful here. Prompt 2 enabled candidates to use vocabulary for describing emotions and sensations: 'in pictures you can't feel emotions', 'you feel overwhelmed to see ...' Prompts 3 and 4 gave candidates the opportunity to disagree strongly. Examples of useful expressions: 'This is nonsense in my opinion'; 'I disagree strongly because it's important to see where you came from.' In response to Prompt 5, most candidates expressed the view that monuments connect the past to the present, that this is a good thing and can serve as a lesson: 'It should be a warning for us that that shouldn't happen a second time.'

B – Our neighbours

This card was reasonably frequently chosen. Some candidates interpreted 'neighbours' as family members and some candidates had to ask for clarification of the meaning of 'neighbouring countries'. In response to Prompt 3, vocabulary varied from 'If it's any horrible neighbours, they can talk to you for other neighbours', to the more succinct 'Gossips can be really annoying.' Words and phrases describing the impact of bad neighbours included 'dreadful', 'irritating', 'get on each other's nerves', 'it can be tricky for you to sleep' and 'the noise can get out of hand'. In response to Prompts 4 and 5, stronger-performing candidates were able to imagine scenarios rather than simply recount personal experience, often using conditionals and other complex structures. Others related personal experience of neighbouring countries helping each other.

C – Quick thinking

This card was frequently chosen. Synonyms for quick used were: 'sharp', 'rapid'. Prompt 1 elicited strong responses characterised by anecdotes and a range of past tenses: 'Suddenly my horse refused to jump and I knew I was going to fall off.' Prompt 2 produced a variety of jobs including soldier, teacher, waiter, investment banker and fireman. Prompt 3 enabled candidates to use linking structures to express contrast, for example, 'on the one hand ... on the other', as well as lengthier expressions of contrast, such as, 'I have an example of the opposite.' Prompt 3 also elicited conditionals and relative clauses. Successful responses to Prompt 4 included anecdotes and references to technology. One good example given was the microwave which has encouraged people to cook more quickly but unhealthily. Prompt 5 allowed candidates to use speculative language and conditionals, as well as the passive voice. Some good idiomatic language was also employed effectively by candidates: 'think on their feet'; 'let it all sink in'; 'brush through it'; 'putting people's lives on the line'; 'doing things in a matter of seconds'; and 'in the blink of an eye'.

D – Losing and finding things

This card was frequently chosen. Many candidates responded well to Prompt 1 drawing on their own experiences: 'When I lost the bracelet my grandmother gave me, it was awful. I felt really devastated.' More fluent candidates used colloquialisms to good effect ('rush of adrenaline', 'misplaced', 'turned the house upside-down'). In response to Prompt 2, candidates tended to draw on similar items, for example, keys, phones or ID cards. One example of a successful response: 'A common thing to lose is the sunglasses. When you go to a restaurant you lose or forget them there.' Prompt 4 elicited some good discussion, and among stronger candidates, language of justification and conditionals: 'If I lost a wallet I'd want it returned'; 'If you found it on the street, it would be impossible to return a banknote to its owner.' In response to Prompt 5, most candidates agreed that losing electronic data is more serious though sometimes easier to retrieve where it is shared among people.

E – Surprises

This card was frequently chosen. All candidates were able to respond to Prompt 1. Typical examples given were receiving news of the death of a pet, doing well in an exam, witnessing a magic trick, or a surprise party. In response to Prompt 2, many distinguished between good and bad surprises and their corresponding reactions. Vocabulary ranged from single-word items: ‘scream’, ‘freeze’, ‘laughing’, ‘crying’, ‘happy’, ‘angry’, and ‘mad’, to expressions: ‘can be a roller coaster’, ‘normally, they are positive shock, then enthusiastic’. The best responses attempted to give an explanation for people’s reactions, for example, ‘people don’t like surprises sometimes – it scares them because they like having their life planned a particular way – don’t like things to just happen out of the blue’. Typical candidates’ responses to Prompt 3: ‘you have to know the person – what she likes, what she wants, when she has time’, ‘you do not want to surprise them with something they do not like because things can go horribly wrong’. In response to Prompt 4, candidates often used comparative language and this served them well on Structure: ‘as an adult you remember the gift and the circumstances for longer than when you are a child’. Speculative language was useful for Prompt 5: ‘life would be boring without surprises’.

F – Parties

This card was frequently chosen. Most candidates responded to Prompt 1 by talking about a party they had been to rather than one they had organised. Prompt 1 elicited a range of past simple verbs and past time markers. Prompt 2 elicited first and zero conditionals. Some frequently expressed ideas were ‘if it’s too noisy...’, ‘if you don’t know anyone there...’. A common view expressed was that parties are not as enjoyable if there is a mix of age groups or people candidates do not know. Prompt 3 elicited suggestions such as ‘you could go to the park’, and comparatives such as ‘the beach is much better because you can ...’. Many candidates disagreed with the view stated in Prompt 4 that good parties are always noisy, qualifying their opinions with the idea that noise prevents people from speaking to each other. Useful adverbs and phrases employed by candidates included: ‘excitedly’, ‘carefully’, ‘throw a party’, ‘book a room’, ‘make a reservation’, ‘catering and service’, as well as descriptions of different types of music and dancing.

G – Older and younger generations

This card was frequently chosen and generated lively discussions. The word ‘generations’ needed clarification for some candidates. In response to Prompt 1, all candidates were able to provide examples of somebody from a different generation who they admired and respected – often a grandparent or other family member. Prompt 2 typically elicited views that the younger generation are ‘more open-minded’ than the older generation who are ‘not so great at dealing with technology’ but can give ‘advice about life’. Words linked to technology proved very useful in responding to Prompts 2 and 3. Prompt 4 elicited ideas around a ‘simpler lifestyle’ for older generations, contrasting with there being ‘much more pressure on our shoulders’. In response to Prompt 5, stronger candidates gave examples of young politicians. Language and vocabulary of comparison proved useful for this topic as whole, as did time adverbials referring to the past and the future.

H – Playing

This card was the most frequently selected. The verb ‘play’ was repeated extensively throughout and few candidates came up with alternatives. In response to Prompt 1, candidates drew on personal examples, referencing games they played as children, using past tenses and ‘used to’. Prompt 2 appeared harder to develop: stronger candidates talked about different seasons and how this affected playing indoors or outdoors. Many candidates were in favour of young people spending more time outdoors rather than sitting indoors on screens. Vocabulary relating to health benefits was incorporated into these responses. Some candidates struggled with Prompt 3 but stronger candidates were able to talk about specific games and the benefits and drawbacks of these: ‘because in this way candidates are motivated’. In response to Prompt 4, stronger candidates used words such as ‘stereotype’ and ‘sexism’ and produced sophisticated arguments for example: ‘it’s nothing more than an outdated stereotype’. Prompt 5 was well developed by many candidates who supported their answers with personal examples. Ideas such as age-related games were discussed with mentions of games like chess. Some candidates talked about how adults needed a way to de-stress. Good vocabulary related to sports a lot of the time for example ‘tactics’, ‘physical power’, ‘in good physical shape’.

I – Working while you study

This card was infrequently selected. It appeared to be outside the experience of some candidates, leading to a discussion of hypothetical situations. Many candidates recognised the advantages and disadvantages of working while studying, and used contrastive phrases such as ‘on the one hand ... on the other’ to good

effect. Prompts 1 and 2 gave candidates the opportunity to discuss various jobs and talk about casual work as compared to professional or full-time work. Prompt 3 elicited ideas around time management, managing one's personal finances, daily routines, and achieving a balance between work and study. In response to Prompt 4, many candidates felt that work experience was only useful if it directly related to their chosen career. Few candidates were in agreement with the view expressed in Prompt 5.

J – Confidence

This card was frequently selected. Many candidates over-used the word 'confidence' and as such missed an opportunity to demonstrate their paraphrasing skills. There were however some very mature and sophisticated responses: 'Your confidence is your third supporting pillar along with your parents.' In response to Prompt 1, many candidates exclusively referred to personal examples while stronger-performing candidates talked about famous people and demonstrated a greater range of vocabulary through doing so. In response to Prompt 2, many candidates drew on personal experiences of taking exams, performing, or participating in sports to describe a situation where they felt confident. In response to Prompt 3, candidates talked about doctors, lawyers, teachers, and politicians; some effectively using good topic-specific vocabulary such as 'surgery', 'in court' in their discussions. In response to Prompt 4, many candidates were able to give a specific example of how a teacher had helped them. Examples of collocations used to good effect by candidates were: 'believe in yourself', 'lack self-esteem', 'the key to success'.

K – Keeping things

This card was infrequently selected. Prompt 1 was well developed with detailed and persuasive descriptions of special items e.g. 'This book was very important to me because it was passed down through generations from my grandparents, so has special sentimental value for me.' In response to Prompt 2, stronger candidates used modals and adjectives of emotion to good effect: 'they may feel secure with their things around them' was one such example. The most developed responses were elicited by Prompt 4: 'There are many people who have so much money and luxury but are still not really satisfied because they have no real friends, or deep values in life.' Some candidates struggled with Prompt 5, finding it hard to expand on this idea in great detail, saying little beyond, 'yes I agree because we should save money.'

L – Brands

This card was infrequently selected. Prompts 1 and 2 elicited a range of linking devices: 'because', 'therefore', 'due to', as well as comparative structures such as, 'not nearly as expensive as ...' In response to Prompt 1, successful candidates talked in detail about why they chose certain brands, while weaker candidates tended to restrict themselves to one familiar topic, for example, clothing. Conditionals were effectively used in response to Prompt 3: 'If we didn't have social media influencers, people would still judge each other.' Prompts 4 and 5 elicited a range of structures including passives, comparatives, phrases for agreeing and disagreeing, as well as single-word items such as 'advertising', 'influencing', 'success', 'failure' and 'product'. Stronger answers to Prompt 5 discussed the role of big brands in the developing world and the use of advertisements to manipulate behaviour. Phrases such as 'quality versus quantity', 'judging a book by its cover', 'brainwashed', 'social media presence' was also characteristic of higher-level responses. A useful language base for this topic was vocabulary relating to shopping, advertising, likes and dislikes as well as the ability to give reasons for one's likes and dislikes.

M – Heroes

This card was frequently selected. Successful responses described a national hero and their achievements fully. Weaker responses described sports stars or celebrities. Some candidates gave inspiring answers to Prompt 1, for example, 'he goes by the name of, and he defended Lebanon'; 'he fought off-....soldiers'. One advantage frequently mentioned was the ability to influence, which in turn produced some very incisive discussions of heroism. For Prompts 1 and 2, phrases such as 'fought for human rights', 'showed leadership' and 'campaigned for equality' characterised higher-level responses. Prompt 3 also elicited some high-level phrases such as 'lack of privacy', 'people admire you'. Prompt 4 enabled candidates to engage in a discussion of real-life experiences. Stronger answers compared the challenges of teaching to those of nursing: 'A teacher can train your mind whereas a nurse can save your life.' Prompt 5 elicited the terms 'global news' and 'social media'. A wider range of tenses could have improved performance on this topic.

N – Travel

This card was very frequently selected. Prompt 1 proved to be minimally generative, sometimes eliciting a simple list of items with little expansion or development, for example, 'my father travels by plane to his work, I

go on a bus to school'. Prompt 2 elicited strong responses. Here, candidates were given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use a wide range of narrative tenses: 'After I had finished my exams, I decided to travel to Spain. While I was travelling around the country, I got really excited about the food and people.' Many candidates appeared confident with the topic and as such were able to produce complex sentences from the outset, providing a solid and effective response to Prompt 3, in particular. Examples of good vocabulary and collocations used were: 'scenery', 'landmarks', 'comfort', 'greater independence', 'economic reasons', 'share costs'. Prompt 4 proved to be a little less accessible, though stronger candidates were able to link travelling on foot with improving physical health and protecting the environment, often employing excellent vocabulary and phrases: 'improved physical and mental health', 'fight obesity', 'protect resources', 'pollution', 'carbon footprint', 'carbon dioxide levels'. Prompt 5 elicited some enthusiastic responses: 'Yes it's very important. Students can broaden their understanding and learn about other cultures and customs. This will make them more mature in life.'

O – Virtual Reality

This card was frequently selected. Successful responses featured the language of speculation and also conditionals. Most candidates had had some kind of virtual experience they were able to draw on in relation to Prompt 1. Prompt 2 elicited language such as 'the real world' and 'escape'. The most accessible prompt appeared to be Prompt 3. Candidates for whom the overall topic appeared to have most resonance were able to express pertinent opinions about the risks of spending too much time away from reality. One such example was: 'People who play on these games, forget to relate to their friends, family and the real world. They also start to damage their health because they are always acting in the virtual world, but not moving in real life.' Many candidates struggled with the concept expressed in Prompt 4. Prompt 5 elicited a range of future forms and conditionals. Examples of good vocabulary and phrases used throughout discussions of this topic were: 'risk of losing contact with the real world', 'interact', 'socialise', 'risk', and 'excessive'. A good variety of adjectives to describe the virtual reality experience would have helped weaker candidates, as well as more confidence with modal verbs which would have enabled them to avoid repetition of 'realistic'.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/52
Speaking

Key messages

- Examiners should read through the Teacher's/Examiner's notes and the assessment cards thoroughly before conducting the tests.
- New Examiners should watch the Speaking Test training video before conducting tests.
- Teachers should read the Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language Learner Guide (Cambridge Secondary 2) for helpful advice on how to prepare candidates for the speaking test.
- Teachers should conduct practice/mock tests with candidates before they take the test.
- Examiners should pay attention to timings and should be encouraged to use timers.
- Noise should be kept to minimum.
- Examiners should use open questions to elicit more complex responses from candidates in part **D**.
- Examiners should engage candidates in a two-way conversation from the outset.
- Examiners should listen to candidates' answers and respond to them, rather than simply reading the next prompt.
- Successful responses included examples or personal anecdotes.
- Teachers and Examiners should read the Moderation Report sent to the Centre which gives advice on the conduct of the test.
- Teachers and Examiners should ensure correct transfer of marks from WMS to MS1.
- Centres should send the correct number of samples across the range of marks.
- Centres should check recordings for quality before sending to Cambridge International.
- If more than one Examiner is used, the candidates' marks must be internally moderated to ensure a common standard is applied to all candidates. Please refer to the Cambridge International Fact Sheet on Internally Assessed Speaking Tests and the Speaking Test Handbook for guidance.

General comments

Part A

Almost all Examiners read verbatim from the script as instructed. A small number of Examiners paraphrased this part. The instructions that only Part **D** is assessed and the candidate can keep the card until the end of the test are sometimes omitted. Some Examiners started the test by asking the candidates if they are nervous, which should be avoided.

Part B

The warm up section was generally well conducted with Examiners enabling candidates to discuss their hobbies and interests and using these as a basis for selecting an appropriate card. There were some instances of Examiners asking questions about school or exam preparation when a discussion of hobbies and interests may have been more effective for card selection. Some Part **B** sections were too short, often with Examiners stopping this part when they felt they could choose a relevant card, and some were too long. Occasionally Part **B** was conducted before Part **A** which is to be avoided.

Part C

The preparation time was generally adhered to although sometimes the preparation periods were an inappropriate length. There were a number of instances where it was the candidates themselves who said they were ready after only a short time. Some Centres did not announce the topic card at the beginning of Part **C** as instructed. Candidates tended not to ask for clarification of the prompts, although this is allowed if necessary. Overall, assessment cards were chosen with care and a wide selection of cards was used.

Part D

Overall the standard of discussions is improving with most Examiners engaging in two-way conversations from the outset. Generally there is suitable involvement with the topics and Examiners often actively encouraged candidates to extend the topics. Generally, all five prompts were used and in the correct order. However, there were instances of Examiners taking a Question and Answer approach and running through the prompts too quickly or paraphrasing so that the meaning was lost. There were examples of discussions being too long although fewer than in previous series. A number of Part **D** discussions were too short. Candidates must be given the full 6 – 9 minutes for this part of the test.

Application of the marking criteria

Structure – Overall this was mostly accurate with a tendency to slightly severe. The most variance was when moderating between Band 3 and Band 2. Candidates who were missing the occasional article or mixing their word order were often more severely marked than was necessary. Examiners had to be careful to ensure a wide range of structures were demonstrated with particularly fluent candidates.

Vocabulary – This was generally accurate with slight fluctuations of severity or generosity in some instances. Often the vocabulary mark was lower than was appropriate if the structure was impaired. Some candidates who used C1 words were placed in lower band 2.

Development and Fluency – This was generally accurate with some slightly severe and some slightly generous marking. Some candidates who spoke faster than other candidates and had pronunciation errors were given higher marks than those who spoke slower but with fewer errors. Sufficient opportunities were given to allow demonstration of development and fluency.

It would be beneficial with some candidates to encourage them to speak a little slower so that their meaning is clearer.

Administration

Recordings – Background noise was evident in some recordings and should be minimised where possible. Candidates need to be sufficiently close to the microphone to be clearly heard. Large Centres must indicate which Examiner had examined which candidates, making it difficult to moderate a range of Examiners. All tracks were separated and labelled, though centres are reminded to label their samples with candidates' names as well as numbers.

Sampling – Centres are advised to check the information about how many samples are to be sent.

Documentation – Overall, the final marks submitted to Cambridge International were generally accurate. Examiners are encouraged to use the electronic documents for accuracy of transcription and addition of marks.

General comment – Centres are reminded that candidates must not bring mobile phones, smart watches or any other electronic devices into the Examination room. If such devices are being used by an Examiner to record the test, these must be on silent.

Internal moderation after the speaking tests

Where more than one Examiner is used at a Centre, internal moderation must be carried out according to the guidelines supplied by Cambridge International.

Each Examiner should list their candidates in descending order of marks. The candidate with the highest mark should be at the top of the list, and the candidate with the lowest mark should be at the bottom of the list.

The lead Examiner should then review the marking by each Examiner. To do this, the lead Examiner should listen to a range of candidates (top, middle, bottom) from each Examiner, identifying if there are points on the mark range where adjustments are required. This will produce a consistent rank order of candidates across all Examiners at your centre. If no adjustments are required to an Examiner's marks, these are the final total marks that should be submitted to Cambridge International. If an adjustment to an Examiner's marks is required, the lead Examiner should make this adjustment to all the marks given by that Examiner in that

mark range. The adjusted marks are then the final total marks which should be submitted to Cambridge International.

The lead Examiner should record the final total marks for all candidates in the final column of the working mark sheet or oral examination summary form. They should then submit these marks to Cambridge International according to the instructions set out in the Cambridge Handbook.

When candidates' marks have been internally moderated, the change should be indicated on the WMS against each of the criteria.

Comments on specific topic cards

A – Day trips

This card was very frequently chosen. Some candidates asked for clarification of what was meant by a day trip. Sometimes the candidate gave examples of going to a foreign country which indicated a trip rather than a day trip specifically. Successful responses drew on the candidates' own experiences.

B – Understanding others

This card was frequently used. Some candidates were able to respond well to the topic, but others needed to further develop their ideas. In response to prompt 1, many engaged well and discussed poignant memories. Prompt 2 was similar with effective responses giving sophisticated insight. Strong candidates developed their ideas effectively by using a wide variety of linking words and sentence structures.

C – Being impressed

This card was chosen less often. When chosen, the topic was handled well in most cases. A wide range of responses to the prompts were given and the prompts were generally understood and engaged with.

D – Special occasions

This card was frequently chosen. Candidates sometimes asked for clarification regarding the topic which was given promptly and appropriately. Some less effective responses contained repeated use of the phrase 'special occasion' without specific references to examples. The special occasions discussed around Prompt 1 were most often birthday parties or weddings that candidates had attended. In response to Prompt 3, candidates provided knowledge of what arranging a special occasion might involve and tended to use the 'if' conditional: 'If you are concerned about the outcome you will worry.' Many appeared to find it difficult to be specific about what makes an occasion special whereas Prompt 5 elicited varied responses and most candidates had a lot to say. They also introduced effective linking phrases: 'From what I've experienced'; 'I can also say'; 'On the other hand if you have...'

E – Awards

This card was frequently chosen and was often given to candidates who expressed an interest in sport. Weaker responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of the difference between award and reward. In response to Prompt 1, most could provide examples before moving on to the advantages and disadvantages of awards, leading to the use of interesting vocabulary such as 'over confident', 'inferior', 'superior' and, in one instance, 'self-actualisation'. Responses to Prompt 3 encouraged the 'if' conditional and deliberation: 'Well, it depends on...' and pros such as 'increases your motivation levels'; 'makes you strive'; 'is an incentive' and boosts 'self-esteem'.

F – Fresh air

This card was frequently chosen. Candidates were able to talk about pollution using a lot of relevant subject-related vocabulary. For Prompt 1, many candidates explained the health benefits of fresh air and said they felt more positive being outdoors. Prompt 2 elicited a range of ideas on how local people can keep the air clean, such as planting trees, car pooling and using green materials, using vocabulary such as 'dispose', 'decompose' and 'renew'. Similarly, Prompt 3 elicited a range of ideas such as wearing masks, air filters in homes, schools and public places, such as hospitals. For Prompt 4, many candidates felt it was the government's responsibility: 'we pay taxes, we elect them hoping for a better life'; 'it's the country's fault';

'without government leadership it's hard for individuals to keep the air clean'. Others felt that businesses should also bear some of the blame, 'industrialisation releases CO₂ into the air'.

G – Taking a break

This card was fairly frequently used. Most candidates engaged with the idea of relaxation for Prompt 1. Short breaks involved frequent references to bathroom breaks, taking a nap, going on social media, sleeping, cooking and video games. Stronger responses tended to expand on the examples given through development of pros and cons. The more open concept in Prompt 5 required some prompting from Examiners, with stronger responses often referencing the benefits of a gap year.

H – Being bored

This was infrequently chosen. Weaker responses demonstrated difficulty in modifying 'bored' or in offering new vocabulary and phrases for each prompt. In response to Prompt 2, there were a range of activities offered for preventing boredom such as fidgeting, playing chess, using Google to learn something, reading or talking to people. Prompt 3 elicited many reasons for boredom. Stronger candidates offered 'we're born with different skills and people tend to like the things they're good at' which then led on to 'being not good at something makes you bored ... a lack of knowledge, not just too much free time'.

I – Making music

This card was frequently chosen and elicited some good topic-specific vocabulary such as 'hip hop', 'remix', 'lyrics', 'soundtrack', solo'. Some examples of people who make music were music teachers or famous pop singers. The reasons given for making music in Prompt 2 were commonly 'to express emotions' or 'for fun/relaxation/relieving stress'. There was some differentiation in response to Prompt 3, between the separate aspects of making music – some felt that writing songs was easier done alone, as there might be too much different input from a group, whereas playing and singing was better done with others as it was 'more interesting to share ideas'. Responding to Prompt 5, candidates referenced how the use of social media and singing in different languages helps communication.

J – Cash

This card was often chosen and worked well when the Examiner made sure beforehand that the candidate had some interest in the topic. Prompt 1 was accessible to candidates, although some needed the key word 'cash' explained. A range of topic related vocabulary was generated, including 'wallet', 'bank balance', 'ATM', 'lavish lifestyle', 'credit/debit card', 'hacker', 'interest rate', 'robbery' and 'pay with plastic'. Often candidates compared rural areas with towns and cities, 'you need cash in rural areas'; 'in some countries you can still barter in villages'. Prompt 3 generated conditional structures ('If you want to buy something expensive you can use your debit card') and Prompt 4 elicited some good vocabulary such as 'scamming' and 'cybercrime'.

K – Films

This card was frequently chosen, with candidates seeming confident in discussing streaming and other on-line movie channels. For Prompt 1, most candidates were able to provide topic vocabulary such as 'superhero', 'trilogy' and 'sound effects'. Candidates at all levels were able to refer to specific genres – 'comedy', 'action', 'horror'. Prompt 2 enabled some to demonstrate advanced phrasing; 'Watching in the cinema has its perks'; 'If you want to save money, you can watch it at home', 'I prefer watching films at home, so that you can sit around with your friends and share some popcorn.' Prompt 3 was best answered when candidates referred to specific examples, as this generated general topic vocabulary.

L – Interviews

This card was chosen less often, but worked well if the Examiner had established that the candidate had some experience of interviews. Stronger candidates were able to express their experiences in response to Prompt 1 using a range of structures and verb tenses. 'As I've changed school very often, I've had many interviews'; 'The questions weren't the ones I'd been expecting'. Candidates used a range of structures in response to Prompt 3 and good development was given around Prompt 5.

M – Clothes people wear

There were many strong responses to this topic. The prompts elicited a good range of vocabulary. Good development was around the discussions about fashion design, the clothes that celebrities wear and also the merits of fashion design as a career choice.

N – Being helpful

This card was infrequently used. Prompt 1 saw some candidates unsure about what ‘occasion’ meant in this context. There was a good range of responses: ‘I helped my brother when he had a problem with a friend’ to ‘I helped my older sister choose clothes for her wedding.’ For Prompt 2, candidates were able to discuss ways they had helped other people, rather than how other people had helped them: ‘I was going through a difficult time at school and my friend was always there to listen to me’. Good development was around whether celebrities were helpful to society or not.

O – The media

This card was frequently chosen and candidates engaged very well with this topic. For Prompt 1, most candidates preferred to find out about the news from social media. Prompt 3 elicited a lot of discussion about fake news: ‘the internet has all kinds of news, real and fake’; ‘Fake news is morally wrong’; ‘It can damage a person’s image’. Prompt 4 elicited the names of jobs, such as ‘journalist’, ‘broadcasters’, ‘news reporters’. Good development was mostly around the reasons why candidates would not want to work in the media: ‘I’d prefer to work in an office and not have to travel around to different places.’