

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/01

Composition

General Comments:

The choice and range of questions allowed candidates to show their true ability in this component. It was pleasing to see that four out of the five topics in **Part One** found favour with a large number of candidates; also it was pleasing to see that **Part Two** produced very little difficulty for the vast majority of candidates despite being a slightly more unusual scenario. The performance overall was well up to the standard of that in previous years, if not better. There continues to be a shortage of scripts at the very highest level; some areas also have very few scripts at the lowest level but this is not true of all Centres. There were hardly any rubric offences and certainly there were very few scripts that were irrelevant. Most Centres seem to have discouraged lengthy first drafts but some Centres still need to remind candidates that time in the exam does not really allow for this. If used, they must be crossed through. Spelling was also considered to have maintained the improvement noted last year.

Some linguistic problems persist and the same comment must be repeated from last year's report. Many candidates struggle with verb forms and tenses – improvement in this aspect would make the biggest difference to a candidate's achievement. Problems also frequently occur with number agreement between subject and verb, and between adjective and noun. There is still the overuse of commas to separate sentences and the correct punctuation of speech still needs more thought than some candidates give it.

Comments on specific questions:

Part One

Question 1. Describe how you travel to school every day and what you see on the way.

The intention behind this question was to engage the descriptive powers of the candidate. What was seen did not necessarily have to be an everyday occurrence but ought to reflect the kinds of things it was possible to see on the way to school. It proved to be a very popular question in all parts of the world and offered fascinating insights into the daily lives of candidates, particularly into the early starts and the self sufficiency of many young people. Modes and means of transport were many and varied as were the distances travelled. Some proved to be very lucky indeed and enjoyed the services of a private, family chauffeur to travel; some covered long or short distances on a trusty bicycle while some walked for no more than five minutes but still managed to witness quite a lot. Most candidates used public transport of some kind with the majority taking a bus and almost universally opting for the back seat of the vehicle from which to witness the world. Students journeyed through various locations which gave local detail (sugar cane plantations in Mauritius, markets in Pakistan etc.); most drew attention to the transition from rural to urban settings and the better candidates suggested the tension between the two – fresh air versus pollution. There was very frequent mention of traffic jams. Very good use was often made of the various senses in describing the journey and the characters encountered, with stronger candidates going beyond the obvious visual appeal to suggest the smells and sounds that characterised various enterprises. The key to a good answer was a focus on this descriptive element and to write in the present tense to give life and immediacy to the journey – this did not mean that the occasional past tense event (a remarkable crash recalled at a particular junction) did not work very well in adding depth. Where weaker candidates sometimes let themselves down was in treating the essay as more of a narrative set on one day which very often did not get much further than being merely a list of directions or buildings from home to school, or an overlong description of their efforts to prepare themselves before leaving the house. Use of 'send to' school where 'take' is the usual English usage is almost universal but still not acceptable.

Question 2. What are the best and the worst aspects of being a teenager?

With its obvious appeal to the age group, this again was a very popular question across all areas of the world. It was not necessary to deal with the best and the worst aspects equally to gain a good mark but it was very difficult to award a top mark to someone who dealt exclusively with either aspect. There was inevitably a predictable side to some of the ideas but this did not make them any the less convincing. Teenagers saw the best aspects (in no particular order) as growing independence (and, conversely, parents providing everything), the ability to earn their own money, growing respect from adults, the ability to enjoy the fashion market and an increasing circle of friends. Some of the worst aspects included increasing responsibilities and a growing seriousness/expectation in schoolwork and exams. Some of the manifestations of teenage life brought a mixed response as, for example, physical changes brought a welcome signal of adulthood but also meant that older students had now to look after and protect younger siblings. Similarly, the oft-mentioned awareness of the opposite sex led to some touching and poignant reflections on attractiveness and adolescent embarrassment. Stronger candidates could give equal time to both sides of the question but could also see the relationship between both sides, the inevitability of gain and loss as one grew older and left behind a childhood viewed with nostalgia to enter an adulthood full of possibilities. The best writing had a strong structure in this question as candidates dealt with each side in turn or moved from one to the other and back again. Within each aspect, the ability to deal with a point convincingly with an appropriate example and then move on was helpful. Weaker candidates were repetitive in their evidence. Unfortunately also, weaker candidates found the necessary language particularly difficult – with no easy abstract noun to use (such as ‘childhood’ or ‘adulthood’) structures were often flawed and communication suffered. A particularly negative impression was created in the use of language when candidates opened sentences or paragraphs in the plural - ‘The best aspects of being a teenager...’ - and then proceeded to mix agreement, either in the verb form (was/were; is/are) or by giving only one example.

Question 3. Uniforms.

This was the least popular question and this was true throughout all Centres. Most candidates treated it as a discursive essay and gave arguments for and against the use and significance of uniforms. It was open to ideas on all sorts of uniforms and nearly all candidates were in fact just as interested in talking about military, business and vocational uniforms as they were about school wear. Essays in the main were well done as the topic was only chosen by the minority who had something to say on the subject. There were strong arguments in favour of uniforms in the sense that they promoted a corporate identity, allowed for easy identification, and took away the competitive element in schools when candidates wore their own clothes. Against uniforms were those candidates who wanted more individuality, those who were against them on fashion grounds and even some, surprisingly, who thought they increased the chance of being caught when doing something wrong. As with **Question 2**, good structure paid dividends and in truth most candidates were very good at ordering their material. Because there were so many different types of uniform to draw on, there were fewer examples of candidates being repetitive in their material compared to discursive choices in previous years, although this was still the case with candidates whose linguistic abilities were not up to this task and those who simply described uniforms rather than discussed the issues.

Question 4. Write about an occasion which taught you that money is not the most important thing in life.

This essay, as with **Question 5**, proved to be very popular indeed because of the narrative potential. There were of course very many different scenarios here, from narrators being ignored by friends and/or family after arrogance brought about by wealth, to narrators enduring the death of a friend or relative when money was of no help. Illness and love affairs were very frequent in these essays. Some were highly dramatic, even improbable, some were low key but all were notable for a lesson being learned and the subsequent resolution never to make the same mistake again.

Question 5. Write a story about someone who had to break the rules despite knowing it was wrong.

Again, there were many different scenarios in the responses to this question. Most of them related to school with people cheating in examinations because of huge pressure being applied to them or in order to help a friend. There were a number of highly dramatic accounts of people reduced to stealing examination papers in response to blackmail threats from sinister, underworld figures. Often people had to break speed limits to get to a hospital but sometimes candidates over-dramatised these essays with major crime stories being totally unrealistic.

Part Two

In **Part Two**, candidates were asked to imagine they had been asked to make a speech to their class about an enjoyable family day out which had one disappointing aspect. The majority of candidates responded extremely well to this task and were able to gain all five Content points very easily; in fact, gaining four or five Content points was the norm this year as the scenario seemed to be within the experience of the vast majority of candidates. The results were generally very good pieces of writing with the best pieces being distinguished by their ability to make the writing obviously a speech and not simply a good essay about a day out.

A perfect answer had:

- clear details about when **and** where the event was to take place;
- a definite reason for the outing;
- clear reasons for the day to be seen as successful;
- something that was a problem with the day;
- some sign that a family member or friend agreed or disagreed about some aspect of the day.

Where candidates failed to gain the Content points they were usually guilty of simply omitting the point or misreading the question or the scenario; there was some evidence of too hasty a response by some. Great flexibility was allowed with regard to when and where the event took place. Some gave a date and a day or just either of these. Some referred to a period such as 'During the Easter holidays...' or 'last week'. Many candidates mentioned a specific location such as a town or particular mountain region/forest area whereas some merely said something like '...at the beach..' to suggest where it took place. As this **Part Two** did not hinge on absolute precision here, such flexibility could be allowed whereas an account for the police, for example (as in last year's paper), would demand greater exactness. A focus on the purpose of the day required more than just where it was located – 'at the beach' was fine for location but some activity or objective was required for purpose. It was very common for candidates to mention the need for a family outing to bring the family closer together after stressful exams or work. However, the almost universal use of '...it was a long time since Examiners had not gone...' proved to be an extremely awkward construction. The success of the day was a straightforward point to gain as it could be stated or implied through the activities of the day. The disappointment offered was very commonly the intervention of rain to dampen the enjoyment or some attraction being closed unexpectedly. Examiners were also struck by the concern many candidates felt about pollution in their areas. Often a parent was phoned and had to return to work – this was fine even though it was not really about the venue or purpose. However, it was very difficult to award a point to a candidate who thought the disappointment of the day was something totally unrelated, such as one candidate who was disappointed at having failed an exam some time before. Alcohol/drunken uncles seemed to provide a bit of disappointment. Very occasionally, candidates strain the Examiner's sense of belief as with one candidate this year who saw disappointment because a 'lion got loose...and ate some people'! Ultimately these four points were overwhelmingly gained by nearly all candidates, although some forgot one or the other element of when *and* where for the first point. The problem came with Content point 5. Some candidates left it out completely; some left it vague by merely saying '...my family agreed with me...' but they gave no indication as to what was the point of agreement.

The linguistic mark for this question was as always very much tied to the linguistic mark given in **Part One**. This was partly due to the fact that most candidates wrote as they would for a **Part One** essay and did not give enough thought to this being a specific task of directed writing. Register could help here. A small number of weaker candidates launched into a letter format complete with address, salutation and valediction, obviously assuming the same task came up every year. Those who scored more highly were those able to give the appearance of a speech. Some opened with a formal address to the audience ('Good morning Mrs - ---- and classmates'), some with a more informal address – both were acceptable. The writing was made even more authentic by some when they remembered to finish with a suitable ending such as 'Thank you for your attention.' Best of all of course, and this was restricted to more able candidates, was the inclusion of occasional rhetorical devices such as a question ('Has any of you been there?') to indicate a relationship between speaker and audience. The appropriate use of humour helped greatly to give life to the writing of some candidates who were gifted in the way they detailed mishaps.

However, one particular shortcoming needs attention, especially as it had been mentioned in last year's report. Some candidates who had paragraphed **Part One** well yet again seemed to lose the skill in **Part Two**. This is possibly because of the relative shortness of the piece as was mentioned last year, but a whole speech as one paragraph denies the obvious need to give an audience thinking time between ideas – it is worth reiterating that it is always useful for candidates to use the bullet points to indicate paragraphs if they are in any doubt. It was a pity, too, that so many candidates were unable to copy the word 'disappointment' correctly from the rubric.

Guidance for teachers preparing candidates for future examinations:

Much of the advice for improved performance would be the same as that given in previous years and therefore previous reports are recommended. Once again this year it was rewarding to see less obvious rehearsed material – indeed the practice seemed well on the way to disappearing. Similarly, Centres seem to have taken note of the need to eliminate prepared openings to essays; this is a welcome development for which Examiners are grateful. There is still too much lengthy rough drafting and some **Part Two** answers were very short or omitted. 'Stuff/stuffs' is too commonly used as a cover for precision. Candidates could also benefit from working on first language constructions.

Mobile phone 'texting' language continues to be an issue with a minority of candidates and there is an overuse of the word 'gonna' in a significant number of cases.

Handwriting is, as always, of a very high order.

Final Comment:

As always, the marking of this component was a pleasure and Examiners overwhelmingly admired the achievement of the candidates who took the examination.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/02
Comprehension

General comments

The narrative topic of the passage seemed to be accessible to most candidates and to engage their interest. The female protagonist was designed to provide a contrast with many previous Papers where the main character was male. It was felt that leaving home to take up further study is a topic which would be within the experience of many candidates, their family members or teachers. Overall, the passage seemed well matched to candidates' understanding.

The performance of candidates showed that, in general, they had been well prepared by their teachers and understood the nature of the examination. The entire range of marks, from 0 to 50, was seen. Examiners reported very few rubric infringements.

Candidates seemed to be familiar with the structure of the paper and, in the main, the types of questions likely to be asked. Almost without exception, candidates completed the paper, although not all managed to offer both a rough draft and a fair copy of their response to the summary question. The paper followed the usual pattern. Twenty five marks were allocated to the testing of literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary, use of own words and appreciation of writer's craft. A further twenty five marks were allocated to the summary question, these marks being divided between assessment of ability to select content points from the text and assessment of the ability to express these points fluently and in own words. The type of question giving most difficulty was the question which required candidates to answer in their own words; some candidates seemed to ignore this rubric or, even when they identified the key words for recasting, found it impossible to find synonyms. However, Examiners reported a pleasing reduction in the number of candidates simply ignoring the rubric instruction to use their own words.

A few candidates did not put their candidate number on the script, or used a wrong or illegible number. Candidates must be aware that the correct identification of scripts is vital, not just at the marking stage, but at the various levels of checking which are undertaken to ensure the consistency and integrity of the examination.

A common concern expressed by Examiners was over the number of candidates who wrote down, either in error or deliberately, the wrong number of words used in their summary. Sometimes the discrepancy here was as great as forty words. Candidates must understand that accuracy in the summary word count is important and that their word counts will be checked by the Examiner. Other candidates, while not giving misleading word totals at the end of their summary, wrote far in excess of the prescribed 160 words; one Examiner reported a summary of 400 words.

A few candidates wasted time by copying out each question before answering it, or by copying out the entire stem of the question in their answer. A few candidates wrote in the margin of the paper: this made marking and correct totalling of marks difficult for examiners.

Many examiners noted the neatness of presentation and handwriting, and the fact that spelling and punctuation were generally very good.

Concern was also expressed by Examiners about Centres which issue candidates with sixteen page booklets on which to write their answers, when a booklet half that size would be more than adequate and would be more cost effective in terms not only of paper but also of postage.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 was designed, as the opening question, to ease candidates into the examination with a fairly accessible test; however, this did not prove to be the case with many candidates, because it could not be answered by lifting. Candidates were required to distil the text at line 2 and make the link between the tears pricking Anna's eyes and the next step, which would be crying or weeping. Only about half of candidates answered this question correctly; most of the others lifted at line 3 and wrote that Anna was afraid of making a spectacle of herself. This was no more than a paraphrasing of the question rather than an answer to it and was consequently incorrect. Other candidates wrote, wrongly, that she was trying to stop herself thinking about her mother.

Candidates fared reasonably well with **Question 2(a)**. Anna could not find her passport because she was panicking or anxious, and because her handbag was overloaded. As this was not an own words question, candidates were free to lift the words 'panicking' or 'in a state of great anxiety' or 'her overloaded handbag'. Where candidates failed to score here it was often because they had lifted excess text in their answer, e.g. 'she fishes in her overloaded handbag'. Such answers could not score the mark because they did not answer the question.

Question 2(b) was the first of the three questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. It presented the original difficulty that the candidates were required to isolate the key words for re-casting, namely 'startled' and 'hostility'. Many candidates were successful with 'startled' offering correct synonyms such as 'surprised', 'shocked' or 'afraid'. However, 'hostility' proved more difficult and correct synonyms such as 'unfriendly' or 'suspicious' were less commonly seen. 'Angry' was a common wrong answer because candidates failed to read the text and/or the question properly and confused the mother with the little girl – it was the mother who was angry and the mother was irrelevant to the question.

Many candidates were successful with **Question 3(a)**, and offered the correct two consecutive words namely 'mere routine'. It was clear that not all candidates knew the meaning of 'consecutive'; some offered two phrases or expressions or, in some cases, two sentences.

The next question, **Question 3(b)**, proved to be more difficult. It asked for attitudes of the uniformed official, not mere actions. The answer could be found only by a fairly extensive search of the paragraph and it was necessary for candidates to isolate the key words 'not unkindly' and 'disdainful' as underpinning the two separate moods shown by the uniformed official. 'Not unkindly' was generously accepted as an answer, although 'kind', 'polite' or 'helpful' or their equivalents, were preferable for the first attitude. The second attitude was 'scornful' or 'disapproving' or their equivalents. 'Disdainful' was acceptable, as this was not an own words question, but the mere lift of 'with a disdainful sigh' failed to score as this was no more than an action and the attitude behind the action had not been distilled.

Question 3(c) proved to be probably the most differentiating question on the entire Paper, answered entirely correctly by a tiny minority of candidates. The first mark was scored by many candidates for writing that the uniformed official found it miraculous that Anna was able to give her address because she had not known any of the details about her suitcase; this mark was scored by the reference to lack of knowledge about the suitcase, and not for reference to the address, which was included in the wording of the question and so not worthy of a separate mark. The second mark in the question was given to those few candidates who saw that some distilling of the word 'miraculous' was required and offered it in the form of 'he was amazed' or 'he was surprised' or 'he could not believe' (that she knew her address). Many candidates suggested, wrongly, that the official was surprised that Anna knew her address because she was new to the city.

Many candidates answered **Question 4** correctly by linking its key word 'unreasonable' to the key idea of time. Thus acceptable answers focused on the idea that there was not enough time for the bag to be traced or delivered, or that it could not have arrived so soon. Consequently, the mark was awarded to answers which had some time qualification in them. However, the mere lift of lines 52 -53, 'given the timescale this was hardly surprising', was not worth the mark. In this lift, no distilling had taken place; the word 'timescale' on its own was too vague as it did not make clear whether the timescale was long or short.

Question 5(a) was the second of the quotation questions on the Paper, this time asking for a single word from paragraph 8. Very many candidates made the link between Anna being dizzy looking upwards and the height of the skyscrapers, and offered the correct answer, namely 'dizzily'. The most common wrong answer was 'scanned'.

Question 5(b) was a discerning question designed to differentiate candidates, and this is what it succeeded in doing. Although not a standard own words question, it required candidates to isolate the key words 'surged' and 'impassively'. More than that, it required them to do more than offer synonyms for these key words; it also required them to move from the particular activities described towards much more generalised attitudes. The first mark was scored by those candidates who wrote that city people were always rushing or busy. The answer was best expressed in the present tense, because it called for a continuous attitude and not a single activity, but tense used by candidates was ignored except in the cases of those who lifted at line 65 'they hurried towards their destinations.' Such an answer was not clearly a generalised one and could be taken as a specific action. However, as this was not an own words question, the mark could be gained by writing 'they hurry towards their destinations'. The second mark in this question was even more difficult to score. It required candidates to make a link between impassive faces and a lack of concern for others, a basic selfishness. Thus answers like 'they have no time for other people' or 'they are self-centred' or 'they mind their own business' scored the mark. A popular wrong answer here was the idea that people are always in a hurry, an answer picked up in the text at line 65 and from the answer to the previous limb of the question.

Question 5(c) proved to be a separating question too, but this is to be expected at this later stage of the Paper. The key to answering this question correctly was the word 'inched' at line 66, suggesting slow movement. Thus the mark was awarded to candidates who wrote that the traffic was moving slowly, or that there was congestion or even that there was a traffic jam – even jams move eventually. Any answer that they were waiting for the lights to change was wrong; in fact, the lights must have been green anyway, because after they changed, (presumably to red) Anna was able to walk across the road (presumably at green for pedestrians). Any additional reference in an answer to motor bikes, or exhaust fumes, or people surging past denied the mark in an otherwise correct answer. Many candidates merely wrote that they were in a hurry, which was no more than a paraphrasing of the question.

Question 6(a) was generally well answered by candidates, who scored the available mark for linking 'fearful' in the question and the text to the idea of her clutching her bag, and therefore writing that Anna was afraid of having her bag stolen, or of losing her bag.

Question 6(b) was the second of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words by first isolating the key words, namely 'vastness' and 'variety'. Candidates were led to these key words by the trigger word 'relishing' and, even if the meaning of 'relishing' was not known, it should have been possible to make the link. A reasonable number of candidates were successful with 'vastness', offering synonyms such as 'large size' or 'hugeness'. Those who offered adjectives instead of a noun e.g. 'big' or 'gigantic' were also awarded the mark as it was understanding and not grammar which was being tested. The word 'size' alone failed to score as this was too vague, and could mean small size; precision of understanding, if not grammar, is required in answering own words questions. Fewer candidates were successful with synonyms for 'variety'; possible correct answers were 'different', or 'selection' or 'diversity', whereas answers which concentrated merely on number rather than type were insufficient, e.g. 'many' or 'multiple'. Unfortunately, some candidates got sidetracked and ignored the rubric instruction to write in their own words, concentrating instead on Anna buying a bracelet for her sister. Some candidates failed to make the connection with 'relishing' and offered as an answer the text at lines 72-73, answers which mentioned only the coolness, the aromas or the voices; such answers were not valid, although they did not deny the mark for an otherwise correct answer.

In **Question 7**, most candidates scored the easier, literal comprehension mark for writing that Anna was happy because she had her suitcase back. There was some fortuitous lifting at lines 84-86 where weaker candidates stumbled upon the mark. However, the second mark was designed to be the discriminating mark, where candidates had to make an inference at line 84, 'amazed at the difference a day could make'. Although the lift alone was insufficient, the mark could be scored for inferring from the lift that Anna was starting to settle, that she was no longer homesick or that she had enjoyed her day at the market.

Question 8 was the customary vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show their understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or expressions from a choice of eight. Examiners reported fewer problems and generally higher marks than in some previous Papers. A reasonable degree of success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'same' or 'similar' for 'common', 'looked at/around' or 'studied' for 'surveyed' and 'carefully' or 'closely' for 'intently'. A popular wrong answer for 'common' was 'usual' suggesting candidates offering a synonym without checking the word in its context. 'Entirely' was recast by many correct synonyms, e.g. 'completely' and 'fully'. The least popular choices were probably 'flicker', meaning 'flash' or 'quick look', 'dejectedly', meaning 'sadly' or 'unhappily' and 'veiled' where acceptable synonyms were 'hidden' or 'covered'. A popular wrong answer for 'dejectedly' was 'disappointedly'. It was surprising, and a reflection on the richness of the English language, to see how many synonyms exist for 'zigzagged', only a few among them being 'criss-crossed', 'wound' and 'meandered'. A common wrong answer was 'not in a straight line', which was much too vague to score the mark. Examiners reported a full range of marks in this question. They also reported, as usual, some candidates giving the question word in a sentence rather than trying to explain its meaning, but there were many fewer cases of this than in previous years. As ever, there were some candidates who offered two or three synonyms for each word; such candidates must realise that only the first word offered will be credited. Another misconception among a few candidates was that all of the words would need to be tackled, or perhaps that the best five of eight would be credited; such candidates must understand that only the first five attempts will be looked at by the Examiner.

Question 9, the final question on the paper was, as is customary, the summary question, carrying half the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to summarise the difficulties, anxieties and unpleasant experiences which Anna had in the airport and on her journey to, and arrival at, her college accommodation. Unusually, the area of summary search was the first part of the text rather than the second section, although this should have had no effect on the methodology employed by candidates. As is normal, the rubric asked candidates to base their summary on just more than half of the original text, expressing content points as far as possible in their own words, using a maximum of 160 words, the first ten of which were given. They were to write in continuous prose, not note form. There were twenty three content points, of which they could identify any combination up to a maximum of fifteen points carrying one mark each. There were many agents mentioned in the passage – the mother, the child, the immigration officer, the businessman, the teenager, the uniformed official, the taxi drivers, the bus driver – and the need for precision probably led to a loss of marks. Examiners reported that almost all candidates completed the summary question, often with a rough draft and a fair draft. However, there continued to be the incidence reported of candidates failing to cross out their rough draft, thus failing to make it clear to the Examiner which version was to be marked. A very small number of candidates forfeited their Style mark by writing their summary in note form rather than continuous prose.

There were four content points available in paragraph two. The opening ten words were designed to ease candidates into the summary by leading them to the first content point, which was that many people were waiting to have their passports checked. The paragraph went on to explain that Anna thought she had lost her passport, although many candidates spoiled this point by writing that she had in fact lost her passport, which was untrue. Others lost the mark because, without previous reference to the passport, they merely copied over 'she was convinced she had lost it' which was of course ambiguous. The next two points were that the mother was angry or unfriendly towards Anna, and that the little girl was also unfriendly. There was no mark for writing that the little girl was startled because, although that was true, it was not a difficulty or unpleasant experience for Anna. Few candidates scored the marks available for the points about the mother and her little girl.

In paragraph three, another four content points were available. Anna realised she was in the wrong queue, and the other queue was moving faster. In addition, the immigration officer did not respond to Anna's greeting and was unfriendly towards her. Almost no candidates scored all four marks in this paragraph.

A further two marks were awarded in paragraph four to candidates who wrote that a businessman and a teenager pushed Anna. Although strictly speaking the businessman pushed in front of her, and the teenager both pushed in front of her and bumped into her, leniency was exercised here and pushing into or in front of her were seen as interchangeable, and so many candidates scored at least one of the two available marks. Similarly, candidates who wrote that people bumped into Anna without differentiating the agents were awarded one mark and not zero marks. Another two marks were available in this paragraph for writing that Anna's suitcase was missing, and that she was left alone in the baggage hall. Almost invariably, candidates made the point that Anna had lost her suitcase.

In paragraph five, two marks were awarded to candidates who wrote that Anna was unable to describe her missing suitcase to the official and that he consequently treated her disdainfully. The first mark was scored much more often than the second. Many candidates wasted words here by describing the interview with the uniformed official, and the fact that he would send on the suitcase to Anna's city address; none of this scored marks because it was irrelevant to the rubric, which asked for difficulties and problems, not solutions to the problems.

Paragraph six contained a further five content points. The taxi drivers pestered Anna, she had problems with the strange currency and the bus driver was impatient. In addition she missed her bus stop and had to walk back to the college. Very many candidates understood the point about the taxi drivers, the missed bus stop and the walk, but fewer were successful with the points about the currency and the bus driver.

In paragraph seven, candidates could score four marks for writing that Anna was disappointed that her suitcase had not arrived, that the room was small, that it seemed empty and unfriendly, and that she was homesick. Most candidates made the point that Anna was disappointed about the missing suitcase, but were less successful with the other points. To say merely that she surveyed the tiny room was not sufficient to score the point there, which had to be made as a disadvantage for Anna and not merely as an incidental reference to the size of the room.

As is customary, ten marks were allocated to the style of writing in the summary question, where style was assessed according to how well the candidates were able to use their own words and the extent to which they were able to write error-free, continuous prose, using a variety of sentence structures. Examiners reported that ability to break away from the words of the original text varied from candidate to candidate and even from Centre to Centre, but that in general candidates are becoming more skilful at recasting the original text in their own words. There is a much lower incidence of random, mindless copying than in the past. However, there were still some very weak candidates who lifted almost indiscriminately from the text, producing little more than a random transcript which scored badly on use of own words and, inevitably, did little to pick up relevant content points. Some other weaker candidates played safe by relying fairly heavily on the text wording, thus not scoring highly for use of own words, but in so doing they gained several marks for content points. It seemed that some candidates had been taught, or had decided, to adopt this latter strategy and, indeed, it may be a good course of action for candidates who are lacking in skill or confidence in the use of English. However, only those candidates who were competent and confident enough to grapple with the original text, re-shaping and re-casting it in original complex sentence, were able to gain many, or full, marks for style.

Common errors reported were the usual failures of agreement in singular and plural, misplaced or omitted prepositions, omission of definite and indefinite articles, and inconsistent and illogical verb tenses. As already indicated, spelling and punctuation were generally very good, and handwriting clear, although Examiners also reported problems with some handwriting being so small as to be almost illegible, and crossing out in the first draft causing problems with legibility in cases where the candidate had not written a second draft.

In parts of the world where French is spoken, Examiners reported some confusion between English and French usage. Examples of this were 'journey' for 'day', 'searching her passport' instead of 'searching for her passport', 'her home missed her' for 'she missed her home', 'she was deceived not to see her suitcase' instead of 'she was disappointed not to see her suitcase', the suitcase referred to as 'she' rather than 'it', and 'circulation' for 'traffic'.