

# Coursework Handbook

## Cambridge IGCSE™/ IGCSE (9–1) First Language English 0500 / 0990

For examination from 2027



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## Introduction

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This handbook provides a guide to the coursework option (Component 3 – Coursework Portfolio) for Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) First Language English.

Its purpose is to give advice and clarification on:

- the content of the coursework portfolios
- planning and carrying out the work
- assessing the coursework
- preparing the coursework for external moderation.

This handbook contains marked examples of Assignment 1 (30 marks), Assignment 2 (25 marks) and Assignment 3 (25 marks) demonstrating different standards (high, middle and low), followed by moderator comments which highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the assignments.

## Teaching and learning resources

Your centre will be sent a report from the moderator about the performance of your learners once the results have been published.

The [School Support Hub](#) provides Cambridge schools with a secure site for downloading teaching and learning resources.

A list of endorsed textbooks and resources from publishers are listed on our [public website](#).

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# 1. Coursework Portfolio

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With the support of teachers, coursework allows candidates the freedom and scope:

- to improve their writing skills over a period of time
- to choose topics of personal interest to them, reflecting their lives and their localities
- to consider the quality of their work and to edit, revise and correct it independently
- to take pride in their completed portfolios.

## Aims of coursework

Coursework provides the opportunity for learners to:

- become better writers and thinkers including by writing accurately and effectively by planning, drafting and editing their work
- become better readers (in Assignment 1) by reading critically and working with information by developing skills of selection, evaluation and analysis
- express their personal views on the world about them, appropriate to their age, maturity and experience.

## Contents of the Coursework Portfolio

Candidates submit a portfolio of **three** assignments. These assignments may be completed in any order but should be presented as shown below. The maximum mark for the portfolio is 80: 65 marks for writing and 15 for reading (Assignment 1).

- **Assignment 1:** writing a **speech, letter, article or report** to discuss, argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts of up to two sides of A4 chosen by the centre.
- **Assignment 2:** writing to describe
- **Assignment 3:** writing to narrate

**The text(s) upon which Assignment 1 is based** must be included in the sample sent to the moderator. It should contain ideas and opinions with which candidates can engage to offer evaluation.

The portfolio must include the **first draft of one of the three assignments**.

Assignments may be hand-written or word-processed. Dictionaries/spell-checks may be used.

## Length of assignments

We recommend each assignment is 500-800 words. Marks should **not** be deducted for exceeding the upper figure of 800 words per assignment, but it is likely to be self-penalising. Work that is under 500 words may not be long enough to develop and structure the piece of writing satisfactorily.

## Teacher responsibilities

Teachers should:

- plan and set assignments which meet the requirements and are appropriate to the abilities of their learners
- annotate the final draft assignments fully, including underlining or ringed all errors. A summative comment indicating, with reference to the mark schemes, how and why marks have been awarded should be added

- **not** correct or annotate the rough draft of candidate assignments. General advice for improvement may be given at the end of each piece of work but candidates are responsible for all editing and correcting
- mark each assignment individually using the relevant mark table of level descriptions. The marks for each assignment should then be added together to form the final mark out of 80
- contribute to an internal moderation process where a centre has more than one teacher/moderator, to ensure all candidates are assessed to a common standard and all the centre's candidates are placed in rank order. Refer to the [Samples Database](#) for further information regarding the process of internal moderation.

### Incomplete folders

The contents of the portfolio should be assessed individually using each relevant table of level descriptors in the usual way to give a mark for each assignment. A missing assignment should be awarded 0 marks.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work or ideas as one's own. This might happen in a number of different ways. For example:

- Failing to acknowledge quotations or using particular phrases or sentences from an author without giving them credit or closely paraphrasing another author's work.
- Submitting an essay from an internet site or using AI generated content.
- Pasting in text or images from an internet site without acknowledgement.
- Copying or submitting the work of another candidate or person.

**It is the centre's responsibility to make sure all coursework is the original work of candidates.**

Teachers need to make clear the consequences of plagiarism, both at the outset of the course and at intervals thereafter. Assignments 2 and Assignment 3 may be the most prone to misuse of the internet due to the nature of the writing.

Teachers should investigate any work that does not seem authentic or typical of the candidate's usual standard and style, or if one assignment differs greatly in style or accuracy from the others.

To help prevent plagiarism, the initial work on each assignment (up to the rough draft) should be carried out in the classroom and each candidate's progress closely monitored by the teacher. It is important that each stage of the writing is monitored and if the final assignment does not reflect the first draft, teachers should investigate further.

The teacher's role in detecting plagiarism is crucial. If you have doubts about the authenticity of an assignment, it should not be submitted, even if this results in an incomplete folder.

Both teachers and candidates will be required to sign a statement authenticating the coursework portfolio as the candidate's own work.

Cambridge's policy on dealing with malpractice can be found in the *Cambridge Handbook* found on our [public website](#).

## Mark schemes

### Using mark schemes

When assessing each assignment in the portfolio and as a general principle, marking should be positive. Achievement should be rewarded where possible if there is sufficient evidence to do so. Differentiation across the whole range of levels and marks available should be carefully considered.

Teachers should use the mark schemes published in the syllabus (for examination from 2027) as follows:

**Assignment 1:** use Table A to give a Writing mark out of 15; use Table B to give a Reading mark out of 15

**Assignment 2:** use Table C to give a content and structure mark out of 10; use Table D to give a style and accuracy mark out of 15

**Assignment 3:** use Table C to give a content and structure mark out of 10; use Table D to give a style and accuracy mark out of 15

The final mark for the portfolio is an arithmetical calculation based on the aggregate of the marks for the three assignments in the portfolio. Here is an example,

Assignment	Writing (15 marks)	Reading (15 marks)	Composition: Content & Structure (10 marks)	Composition Style & Accuracy (15 marks)	Total mark
1	12	11			23
2			9	12	21
3			8	10	18
Total mark awarded			62		

The mark schemes are arranged in six levels for writing and six levels for reading with Level 0 being the lowest and Level 6 the highest in each case; read from the bottom to the top, each describes a more assured achievement than the one before.

When marking candidates' work:

- read and annotate the work.
- make a 'best fit' judgement, where strengths and weaknesses are balanced to decide which **level** to place it in.
- award a specific **mark** from your chosen level. If all the criteria in a level fit your judgement, award the highest mark. If most but not all of the criteria fit your judgement, award a mark nearer the bottom.

Remember that every assignment will require two separate marks that assess different skills from two different tables of level descriptors as detailed above. All marks should be internally moderated in centres with more than one teacher to ensure consistent application of the mark schemes.

When you have a completed set of portfolios for each candidate, the rank order will be automatically created by the total marks for each candidate.

The *Individual Candidate Record Card* which can be found on the [Samples Database](#) has a space for a comment justifying the marks given for the complete portfolio.

## 2. Planning coursework

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Before you start the course, you will need to think out your strategy. This is especially important if there is more than one teaching set with different teachers. If the assessment of the individual assignments is accurate and reliable the total mark will also be accurate, and consequently a reliable rank order of candidates will be established.

### Choosing the assignments

- It is advisable to allow an element of choice in all three assignments, but the list of choices should be generated by the centre rather than freely chosen by candidates. A general agreement about task setting in the centre would be beneficial and aid internal moderation.
- For **Assignment 1**, the best practice is to give candidates a choice of a few carefully selected texts expressing ideas and opinions about a range of different topics. This allows candidates to write about something which interests them or about which they also have strong views and opinions.
- For **Assignment 2** a choice of titles should be offered to reflect the interests of candidates. The best practice is to offer titles that encourage a descriptive approach whilst avoiding the risk of slipping into a narrative style.
- For **Assignment 3**, a choice of titles should be offered to allow candidates to use their real or imagined experience in the creation of a narrative which can be a personal recount or a fictional story.

### Planning the workload

The coursework option requires different preparation periods compared to the examination and to manage the time effectively you will need to consider that:

- each assignment should go through a draft/redraft phase (preferably in a classroom setting) after which the candidates can submit a rough draft and the teacher can offer general feedback for improvements. Teachers must not annotate or indicate errors in the body of the response of rough drafts. You must include one rough draft in your submission with the feedback included.
- the teacher should assess the final assignments applying the tables of level descriptors according to best-fit judgements.
- internal moderation must take place where there is more than one teacher/moderator in order to establish a reliable rank order.

Candidates can complete more than one response for each assignment so that the best can be selected for the coursework portfolio. Any further responses completed should be based on a different text for Assignment 1 or a different title for Assignments 2 and 3.

### Planning for assessment: internal standardisation meetings

It is important to standardise teachers marking coursework assignments. Sample assignments with the moderator's commentary are provided for this purpose.

Further information about internal moderation can be found later in this guide.



### 3. Coursework assignments

Now it is time to look at the three separate assignments. In the final portfolio we are looking for three pieces that show a clear difference from each other, for example in style/register, audience and genre, so it is important to ensure that the course caters for varied writing before it comes to the time to assemble the final portfolio.

#### Assignment 1 (30 marks): Writing to discuss, argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts

The purposes for writing covered in Assignment 1 are to: **comment, evaluate, assimilate** and **argue** and/or **persuade** in response to a written text(s) of no more than 2 sides of A4.

Candidate responses must be in the form of a **letter, speech, article or report**.

A copy of the text(s) must be included in the sample sent to the external moderator. A maximum of 2 texts should be used.

There are also 15 marks available for writing in **Table A**. This mark will assess the style, structure, range of vocabulary used, suitability for audience and purpose, and level of accuracy.

There are 15 marks available for the response to reading in **Table B**. This mark will assess the range and subtlety of the ideas and opinions evaluated; the quality of the evaluation and analysis in terms of how the writer seeks to influence the reader, and the skill with which the candidate uses the ideas in the text to support the response.

When you assess Assignment 1, the two separate marks for reading and writing will be carried forward to the overall total.

#### Choosing the text(s)

Text(s) should consist of facts, opinions and/or arguments which can be selected, analysed and evaluated by the candidate and can be integrated into their own views. Literature texts should not be used.

Experience has shown that certain types of text are more successful in encouraging appropriate responses than others. The best practice is as follows:

- Choose a text that contains ideas and opinions that can be argued, evaluated and developed. For example, an article or speech which uses inconsistent arguments or confuses fact and opinion or allows emotion to override logic.
- Choose a text of no more than two sides of A4 in total. If you choose too much reading material, it is difficult for candidates to select the best ideas to explore, and the result is that their responses are often too general and not specific enough.
- Avoid purely informative articles (such as travel guides) or lists of factual points from the internet as these have very few ideas or opinions with which to engage. Also avoid texts where the candidate is in full agreement with the writer as they offer less scope for evaluation than a text where some of the ideas and opinions can be challenged. Suitable texts tend to be articles and speeches expressing strong ideas and opinions about subjects where opinion tends to be divided.

## Task setting

**Letter:** the response could reply to the writer or may also be addressed to the publisher / editor of the publication.

**Speech:** the response could also be in the form of a debate speech or a speech in direct response to a speech studied.

**Article:** the response could be in the form of a follow-up article challenging the original text.

**Report:** the response could be in the form of an official report raising concerns or requesting action following the publication of the text or the speech studied.

Responses which challenge some of the writer's ideas and opinions tend to give better results than responses which endorse the text. However, candidates should avoid personal attacks on writers instead engaging with the opinions and ideas that have been read. The texts studied should avoid offensive or disturbing views.

## Key messages for Assignment 1

- Choose a text of a sensible length, that have plenty of ideas and opinions with which learners can engage. Texts should be differentiated to suit ability. If two texts are used they should be shorter and clearly related to allow a cohesive response.
- Do not over-teach the text. Candidates should express their own opinions, not repeat ideas learned by the class. Use different texts to construct the reading skills required for this task.
- Make sure that candidates do not turn the exercise, even partly, into an analysis of style and language.
- When assessing both reading and writing, use the tables of level descriptors and make sure that you understand the key differences between the levels.
- Use Table A (Writing) and Table B (Reading) of the level descriptors when assessing Assignment 1.

## Some suitable examples of articles / topics

- Why social media should be banned for under 16s
- Fast fashion
- How much money do I need to be happy?
- Think before you ink
- Too young to be a criminal
- Is banning plastic possible?
- Veganism
- Goal line technology (for football fans)
- Airbrushing photos of celebrities
- Claims that 'video games lead to violence'
- Banning violent sports like boxing
- The Olympics: an expensive indulgence or cause for celebration?
- What are the potential risks of AI?
- Is influencer culture harmful to individual self-esteem?
- Is remote working more productive than working in an office?

## Assignment 2 (25 marks): Writing to describe

Assignment 2 is a piece of **descriptive** writing which should be written in prose. Poetry should not be submitted for Assignment 2.

There are 10 marks available for 'Content and Structure' (Table C) and 15 marks available for 'Style and Accuracy' (Table D).

It is non-narrative. The writing should be a coherent and connected series of developed ideas and images that build a successful and varied picture of the chosen point of focus. A response that lapses into the narrative will be self-penalising.

Skills required for descriptive writing:

- Linguistic (creating pictures, atmosphere, and/or feelings)
- Structural (creating and ordering enough material to sustain interest and provide overall cohesion).

### Some suitable types of work for Assignment 2

Descriptions of:

- busy places and atmospheres (markets, airports, train stations, beaches)
- quiet and beautiful places and atmospheres
- natural events such as sunrises and sunsets
- cities at night or as dawn breaks
- abandoned or derelict places
- a moment when time stands still
- an event where there is a crowd
- a room where people are waiting
- a sudden storm, hurricane, tornado, blizzard
- a busy marketplace
- an important family celebration
- a visit to a sports stadium.

It is important to understand that descriptions are rarely static. To describe 'a clearing in the wood' is difficult to sustain. It is therefore wise to write descriptions that take place over a very brief period of time or which involve some movement such as approaching a market, visiting a stall and leaving the place behind. You can describe a scene at dawn or as night falls, or the same place in summer and in winter. Such descriptions should not be confused with narratives, which take place over longer periods of time and have specific structures that are different from those of descriptions.

### Key messages for choosing Assignment 2

- It is important to offer candidates a choice of assignment.
- The more successful descriptive pieces are based on personal experience, where a convincing overall picture is created by the development of images, familiar to the writer.

### Assignment 3 (25 marks): Writing to narrate

The purpose of Assignment 3 is to produce a piece of narrative writing of 500–800 words in length.

There are 10 marks available for 'Content and Structure' (Table C) and 15 marks available for 'Style and Accuracy' (Table D).

Narratives may be written in any relevant form. Features of fiction writing should be evident, such as, but not restricted to, description, characterisation and convincing detail. These should be incorporated into a defined and structured plot. Ideas should be explored and developed imaginatively; it is worth remembering that a story that entertains is normally a successful one.

#### Some suitable types of work for Assignment 3

##### **Fiction**

Stories that:

- create suspense and atmosphere
- explore relationships and emotions
- are about adventure and achievement
- contain unexpected events or result in unusual outcomes
- invent contrasting characters facing critical situations in which right triumphs over wrong, fortune over misfortune, etc.
- are about confrontations and their outcomes
- are about journeys and what happens on the way.

Skills required to write fiction include:

- structural (providing characters and details that later become significant; flashbacks; time lapses; different types of beginning and end)
- descriptive/linguistic (providing pictures to clarify and words that define)
- imaginative (providing storylines that are gripping but realistic; selecting essential details which are relevant to the aim of the story; creating interesting dialogue that fulfils a function).

A fiction-based assignment may usefully follow a study of the conventions of fiction: the ability to create characters, to manipulate plot and to use language to convey pictures, thoughts and feelings – these offer challenge at the highest level.

##### **Personal writing**

Stories about (for example):

- an event concerning a family or relative
- an event that is testing and stressful, but ends in success
- a visit to a challenging place, e.g. a surgery or a hospital
- an early memory from one's schooldays
- the holiday of a lifetime, or one that does not work out
- a serious disagreement
- moving to a new place
- events of importance, such as the birth of a sibling or an illness.

An audience for the writing can be specific. Many candidates write for themselves, but they might think of relatives, peers or even teachers. They often write to clear their own minds or to communicate with a private audience.

Skills required for personal writing:

- Writing selectively, since real life events, or those that echo real life, include details that are not relevant to the point of the story (their inclusion can be mundane and slow down the action).
- Adding interest by describing, as if writing fiction.
- Interweaving genuine thoughts and emotions, possibly with action and changes of setting.

### Key messages for choosing Assignment 3

- It is important to offer candidates a choice of assignment.
- The more successful narrative pieces are based on personal experience or within the scope of the candidate's imagined experience.
- Ensure that candidates understand the difference between and function of description and narrative. (In effect the difference between Assignment 2 and Assignment 3 respectively).

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## 4. Administration and moderation

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### Checklist

The centre should complete a coursework cover sheet with a checklist to ensure that all processes have been followed correctly and enclose it with the sample. It can be found here: [Coursework Cover Sheet](#).

- Each centre appoints an internal moderator to be responsible for administration where there is more than one teacher/moderator. More information on this process can be found on the [Samples Database](#).
- During the course, teachers annotate and assess assignments regularly and keep records.
- At the end of the course, teachers finalise the overall marks for each portfolio by selecting the three assignments and adding together the individual assignment marks to reach an overall mark out of 80. These totals will automatically place the candidates in rank order. The folders must be internally moderated to ensure that the marking is consistent across all classes. More guidance for internal moderation processes can be found here: The centre should complete a coursework cover sheet with a checklist to ensure that all processes have been followed correctly and enclose it with the sample. It can be found here: [Internal Moderation at your school](#).
- The forms required for the conduct and assessment of the coursework component may be downloaded from the [Samples Database](#).
- An *Individual Candidate Record Card* must be completed for each candidate and fixed to the front of the portfolio.
- The internal moderator holds a meeting at which the marking of all teachers is internally moderated, and any adjustments made.
- The final marks for **all** candidates in the cohort are entered on the *Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF)*, where all adjustments made at internal moderation are shown. **We no longer use Internal Assessment Mark Sheets (MS1s)**. You submit marks according to the instructions on the [Samples Database](#).
- The internal moderator checks that the marks on the *Coursework Assessment Summary Form* and the *Individual Candidate Record Card* are the same.
- In accordance with instructions received from Cambridge International, a sample is prepared for the external moderator, and this is sent to Cambridge International. Details for the selection of that sample are provided on the [Samples Database](#).

## External moderation

It is a requirement that each centre must send a sample of their portfolios to Cambridge for external moderation. The candidates included in this sample will be selected by Cambridge. Details of this can be found on our samples database.

To access the samples database, your Exams Officer should go to [www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples) and enter your centre number and the syllabus number.

The moderation sample should include a copy of all texts used for Assignment 1 and the first draft of **one** assignment.

It is the responsibility of the centres to ensure that the portfolios of work are securely fixed together when they are submitted to Cambridge for external moderation. Each portfolio of work should be securely attached to the *Individual Candidate Record Card*, which should be completed with all the relevant details. The most secure method of fixing work together is with staples or treasury tags. Paperclips or plastic wallets **should not** be used as a method of securing work because the individual pieces of paper can become loose and potentially mislaid or lost during the moderation process.

Portfolios **should not be** enclosed in individual plastic packets or sent in heavy folders.

The sample should be accompanied by the moderator's copy of the centre's *Coursework Assessment Summary Form* (which should include the marks for the whole cohort **in candidate number order**), a copy of all texts used for Assignment 1 and the *Individual Candidate Record Card(s)* for the candidates in the sample sent.

Where marks are amended by the external moderator, this will be to bring your marking into line with all centres entering the component.

Please check all details, deadlines and arrangements in the *Cambridge Handbook* found on our [public website](#).

## Documentation

All relevant documents and guidance including the *Individual Candidate Record Cards* and the *Coursework Assessment Summary Forms* can be found at: [0500 coursework documents and forms](#) OR [0990 coursework documents and forms](#)

## 5. Assignment 1 examples

**Please note:** For each assignment candidates submitted copies of both the text and task for marking. In this document we have provided the links to the texts.

### Example 1

**Text:** Should Mobile Phones Be Banned in Schools? (Patrick Barkham and Stephen Moss, The Guardian 27 Nov 2012)

[www.theguardian.com/education/2012/nov/27/should-mobiles-be-banned-schools](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/nov/27/should-mobiles-be-banned-schools)

**Task:** A letter to Patrick Barkham in response to his contribution to the article.

The Guardian  
90 York Way  
King's Place  
London  
United Kingdom

**Re:** My thoughts regarding your irrespective article on mobile phones in schools.

Dear Mr. Barkahm,

I have recently read your article in *The Guardian* where you advocate the use of mobile phones in schools, and I must say that your viewpoint has left me in dismay. It's evident that you hold a strong belief in the merits of mobile devices in the educational setting, but I find myself in strong disagreement with your perspective. It is my firm belief that there are considerable downsides associated with allowing the use of cellphones in schools.

You initiate your article by drawing an analogy between mobile phones and seemingly innocuous classroom materials, suggesting that they all share the potential to become 'lethal weapons', but would it not be a stretch to equate the educational utility of a pencil or a piece of paper with the obstructive nature of mobile phones? This comparison, though thought-provoking, oversimplifies the multifaceted issue excessively, entailing further research, which you have omitted.

When entrusted to students, these devices can fulfil diverse roles, some of which may not be congruent with effective learning. With their extensive access to social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, entertainment applications such as YouTube, and messaging



It's also important to take into account that students already preoccupy themselves with their smartphones outside of school. You highlight how helpful smartphones are for differentiated learning, stating that 'it's only beneficial when, in the hands of the user.' However, shouldn't school provide an opportunity for students to distance themselves from these devices and instead focus on communication, physical interactions, and dedicated learning? In a world overwhelmed by distractions, should we be introducing potential diversions into an environment ideal for concentration?

While I acknowledge the potential benefits of mobile phones, such as their use in recording homework tasks on their phone's calendar and utilising the camera function for educational purposes, it's worth noting that in classes where mobile devices are absent, both I and the majority of my classmates experience a heightened sense of focus. The absence of mobile phones allows us to fully engage in the subject without the constant allure of notifications or the inclination to check our devices. This fact alone disproves your assertion that mobile phones do not 'wreak havoc with concentration,' highlighting the flawed assumption you've made and underscoring the insufficient consideration you've given to this matter.

platforms like WhatsApp, mobile phones can serve as potential sources of detrimental distractions. The claim that mobile phones are 'a potentially potent tool for learning' is,

therefore, misleading at best. While they have the capacity to access information, they are also notorious for creating distraction. The fears about their impact on concentration and cyberbullying incidents are not unfounded. To dismiss these concerns is to disregard the well-being of students.

Moreover, your article advocates for 'Bring Your Own Device' (BYOD) as the future of education, with students using their own devices instead of school-issued gadgets. While there are merits to this concept, it neglects to take into account all of the socioeconomic inequalities among students. Assuming that every student owns a phone, or any device for that matter, could potentially widen the gap between those who can access such technology and those who cannot.

You also present the success story of Jo Debens, and while her experiment with mobile phone mapping services is intriguing, it doesn't negate the potential issues caused by these devices. The fact that her school implemented a 'mobile device policy' implies that there are rules and regulations in place to manage mobile phone usage; which acknowledges the inherent problems.

Furthermore, citing the statistics that 'only 1.4%' of adverse occurrences have been connected with mobiles is irrelevant. It's important to question what might constitute a 'negative behavioural incident' in this context and whether all such incidents are reported and recorded accurately. Statistics can be manipulated to support various arguments, but they should not overshadow the potential harm caused by mobile phones in the classroom.

**It's also important to take into account that students already preoccupy themselves with their smartphones outside of school. You highlight how helpful smartphones are for differentiated learning, stating that 'it's only beneficial when, in the hands of the user.' However, shouldn't school provide an opportunity for students to distance themselves from these devices and instead focus on communication, physical interactions, and dedicated learning? In a world overwhelmed by distractions, should we be introducing potential diversions into an environment ideal for concentration?**

**While I acknowledge the potential benefits of mobile phones, such as their use in recording homework tasks on their phone's calendar and utilising the camera function for educational purposes, it's worth noting that in classes where mobile devices are absent, both I and the majority of my classmates experience a heightened sense of focus. The absence of mobile phones allows us to fully engage in the subject without the constant allure of notifications or the inclination to check our devices. This fact alone disproves your assertion that mobile phones do not 'wreak havoc with concentration,' highlighting the flawed assumption you've made and underscoring the insufficient consideration you've given to this matter.**

**Your article concludes by highlighting the efforts made to provide equal access to mobile technology for all students. However, this fails to address the social and economic disparities among students, as not all can afford smartphones or data plans. Moreover, using mobile devices for school work can lead to unexpected financial burdens for parents.**

**Thus, your advocacy for the incorporation of mobile phones in educational settings fails to acknowledge the risks and disadvantages associated with their presence. Despite the potential benefits you brought up, the overwhelming evidence suggests that these devices contribute significantly to distractions, inequalities, and potential harm to students. It is imperative to recognize that the negative impact of mobile phones outweighs most advantages, making their introduction into classrooms counterproductive. Consequently, I am opposed to your absurd notion for mobile phones being permitted in schools.**

**Regards,**

## Moderator comment – Reading

### Strengths:

- The candidate demonstrates a secure and mature understanding of the text and responds to a wide range of explicit and implicit ideas, as well as identifying inconsistencies with the author's arguments.
- There is some successful evaluation of ideas and opinions. The candidate makes some sensible and thoughtful counterarguments to the author's points.
- Overall, the candidate provides a 'convincing response'.

### Weaknesses:

- Greater use of the opposing ideas in the article could have been used to support and develop the candidate's arguments.

This response meets some of the criteria for Level 6 and is awarded a mark of 13.

### Areas for improvement:

- Referring more widely to the opposing ideas in the text.

## Moderator comment – Writing

### Strengths:

- The style is highly effective for audience and purpose.
- The response is securely structured for the reader.
- A range of purposefully selected vocabulary is used with confidence and precision (e.g. 'multifaceted', 'congruent', 'inherent', 'disparities', 'advocacy').
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate.
- Sentences and arguments within the paragraphs are well sequenced and provide fluency of expression and thought.

### Weaknesses:

- Although the letter shows overall cohesion, with a good conclusion, there is occasional lack of cohesion between paragraphs.
- The use of 'absurd' in the final paragraph is a little discourteous, and the valediction is slightly informal.

This piece of writing meets some of the criteria for Level 6 and is awarded a mark of 13.

### Areas for improvement:

- More marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if the candidate had linked their paragraphs to the overall discussion and argument, and to each other, more effectively.
- There are very occasional slips in style which could have been improved through checking and editing.

**Mark awarded for reading = 13 out of 15 (Level 6)**

**Mark awarded for writing = 13 out of 15 (Level 6)**

**Total marks awarded = 26 out of 30**



## Example 2

**Text:** Physical discipline is harmful and ineffective

<https://kellerclinicpc.com/physical-discipline-is-harmful-and-ineffective/>

**Task:** Imagine you are a law enforcement officer dealing with juvenile problems. **Write a speech** directed to school authorities in response to the views on corporal punishment as expressed in the feature article: Physical discipline is harmful and ineffective

Good morning, honorable school administrators. I am Isthiyak Nihar a superintendent in the police force. Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today to address an important issue: corporal punishment, or the physical punishment of children. As a law enforcement officer, I have witnessed how physical discipline, such as spanking or hitting, causes more harm than good to the general wellbeing and development of children.

Studies from experts tell us that hitting a child does not teach them to behave better. Instead it can make them more aggressive. This is very true because children who are physically punished may follow the rules when adults are watching due to fear of being punished but they don't learn to make good choices on their own. This is harmful because children grow up not truly knowing how to make genuinely good choices but try and act good when they are being watched by adults.

Moreover, Children might also learn that it is acceptable to use violence to solve problems because they see their parents or guardians doing the same. When a child is physically punished for misbehavior, they may internalize the idea that hitting or using force is an appropriate way to handle conflicts or express frustration. For instance, a child who is frequently spanked for not following rules might believe that the way to assert authority or get their way is through physical aggression. This could manifest in the child hitting a sibling who takes their toy or pushing a peer during a disagreement at school.

Over time, this learned behavior can extend far beyond the home and school environment, permeating various aspects of a child's life as they grow into adolescence and adulthood. A child who has been taught, whether consciously or unconsciously, that violence is an acceptable means of resolving conflicts may come to view aggression as their primary tool for handling any form of disagreement or frustration. For instance, this individual might respond to conflicts at work with verbal threats or physical altercations, damaging their professional relationships.

In extreme cases, this mindset can escalate into criminal activity. For example, studies have shown that individuals who grow up in environments where corporal punishment or aggressive discipline is prevalent are more likely to engage in criminal behavior later in life, such as assault, theft, or other forms of violent crime. They may struggle to abide by societal rules and norms because they have not learned alternative, constructive ways to handle frustration or resolve disputes. This pattern ultimately perpetuates a cycle of violence, not only harming the individual but also negatively impacting their communities.

In addition, children subjected to corporal punishment often experience significant fear and anxiety. This is not limited to the immediate physical pain but also extends to a pervasive feeling of insecurity and mistrust. For instance, a child who is frequently spanked or hit may become hyper-vigilant, constantly on edge, worrying about when and why the next punishment will occur. This chronic state of anxiety can severely interfere with their ability to learn and focus in school, as they are preoccupied with avoiding punishment rather than engaging in their studies. Studies have shown that children who fear physical discipline are less likely to participate in classroom activities or ask questions, which hampers their academic development.

Furthermore, these children may struggle to develop healthy relationships, both with peers and authority figures, as they often view others through a lens of fear or suspicion. Over time, the psychological effects can be profound. For example, research by the American Academy of Pediatrics has linked corporal punishment to increased risks of developing depression and anxiety disorders in adulthood. Adults who were frequently punished as children may have difficulty trusting others, forming intimate relationships, or may exhibit aggressive behavior themselves, repeating the cycle of violence they experienced. Additionally, in a professional context, they may find it challenging to handle criticism or conflict constructively, affecting their career growth and workplace relationships.

As educators, you play a huge role in shaping the future of our children. That's why it's so important to use discipline methods that help kids grow into responsible and caring adults. There are better ways to guide children—ways that don't involve causing them pain. For example, taking away privileges, using time-outs correctly, or simply talking to them about why their behavior is wrong can be much more effective. By modeling non-violent conflict resolution and communication, adults can teach children healthier ways to navigate their emotions and disagreements, such as talking through problems.

In conclusion, there is substantial evidence that corporal punishment does more harm than good. The detrimental effects on a child's development, behavior, and mental health are intense and long-lasting. As educators and role models, you have the power to choose alternative discipline methods that promote a child's growth and well-being without resorting to physical punishment. By embracing non-violent approaches, you can encourage an environment where children learn to make positive choices, manage their emotions constructively, and build healthy relationships. As I close, I want to thank everyone for their attention and time.

### Moderator comment – Reading

#### Strengths:

- The candidate mainly comments on explicit ideas and demonstrates general understanding of the key points in the text.
- The candidate includes details from the text but uses the text mechanically as the ideas are repeated.

#### Weaknesses:

- The candidate uses the main ideas in the text but does not develop their points in sufficient detail to demonstrate a secure understanding of the more implicit ideas and opinions.
- The candidate does not challenge any of the ideas in the text, so evaluation and analysis are limited.
- The candidate does not always focus on the text.

This response successfully meets the criteria for Level 4 and is awarded a mark of 9.

#### Areas for improvement:

- An alternative text should have been considered where the candidate could challenge ideas and opinions to demonstrate understanding of how writers influence readers.
- A higher mark could have been achieved if the points made had been developed further, and if more implicit ideas and opinions had been identified and evaluated.

## Moderator comment – Writing

### Strengths:

- The style of the speech is sometimes effective with some acknowledgement of audience and an appropriately formal tone.
- The ideas are generally structured and organised to help the reader.
- The vocabulary is mostly well chosen and used with some precision (for example, 'witnessed', 'permeating', 'altercations', 'perpetuates').
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are mostly accurate with some minor errors causing awkward expression.

### Weaknesses:

- There is occasional awkward expression.
- The response acknowledges the audience at the start and finish but does not use rhetorical features to maintain a consistent style as a speech.

This response meets some of the criteria for Level 5 and is awarded a mark of 10.

### Areas for improvement:

- A higher mark from Level 5 could have been awarded if there was greater acknowledgement of the audience to maintain an effective style.
- More careful thought about the structure of the response as a speech would have paid dividends.

**Mark awarded for reading = 9 out of 15 (Level 4)**

**Mark awarded for writing = 10 out of 15 (Level 5)**

**Total marks awarded = 18 out of 30**



### Example 3

**Text:** Shein is the World's Most Popular Fashion Brand – at a Huge Cost to Us All

<https://time.com/6247732/shein-climate-change-labor-fashion/>

**Task:** A letter to the writer, Astha Rajvanshi, in response to the article.

To Astha Rajvanshi,

I have to say I quite liked your article about Shein and how you gave everyone the insight of how corrupt it is. Now I do shop with Shein quite a lot and I've learnt a lot of things that are quite upsetting. So as a person that buys from here, I'm going to give you, my input.

First, you wrote about how Shein has taken over Nike and Adidas as the most Googled clothing brand and overtaken Zara and Macy's in online sales, it has indeed become a "Global juggernaut". I'm surprised that it's called "she-in" but from what I've read I understand why, she is in style perhaps? Yet again another demonstration of how clever and well thought out their marketing is, however, nobody I know knew the correct pronunciation of the brand so maybe it isn't as clever as it thinks! The climbing sales just shows how popular it is, I mean going from 10 billion in 2020 to 100 billion in 2022 is just crazy, as is the quantity of new items added, between July and December of 2021 alone you said they added between 2,000 and 10,000 individual styles each day – who designs all these garments?

Don't get me started with the advertising part of it, they poured millions into Google and Facebook and even have a reality TV show co-hosted by Khloe Kardashian which surprises me a lot because I had never heard of it before reading your article. I do however get bombarded with advertising from google for Shein, even when I read your article online the pop up was some Shein items I had looked at briefly and they wanted to remind me about them! The amount they have spent on advertising and influencers has undoubtedly been a big factor in the company's growth. The question you have given me to ponder is how ethical their methods are and not just in advertising but their environmental ethics as well.

I understood that the manufacturer's rapid use of virgin polyester and large consumption of oil churns out the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> as approximately 180 coal-fired power plants which is shocking. I'm more shocked in the 180 coal-fired power plants used to produce Shein's clothes as it can cause death to people that live near them. The figures you stated of 6.3 million tons of carbon dioxide a year falls well below the 45% target to reduce global carbon emissions by 2030 which means they have little respect for their contribution to global warming. I was unaware that the fashion industry is responsible for releasing more than 10 percent of carbon emissions at all and I realise my buying habits contribute to this.

Shein announced it would spend \$7.6 million on a partnership with the nonprofit, Apparel Impact Institute, which works with manufacturers to set and implement energy efficiency programs. It aims to reduce supply chain emissions by 25 percent by 2030 through energy-efficient projects and a transition to renewable power for manufacturing. I think this was a smart move for Shein as it shows people that they are trying to improve and make a change, but it is yet to be seen.



The brand has a horrific record on worker's rights, the Channel 4 documentary "The Shein Machine" discovered employees were working 75-hour shifts with very little time off, the company admitted to violating Chinese labour law. What I didn't read is if Shein received any punishment or if anybody was prosecuted, it seems from your article an apology and a promise to do more has satisfied their customers and government officials.

Shein is now exploring moving to an online marketplace platform to enable other merchants to sell directly to customers, rather than under Shein's label. I think this idea is quite good, but I

also realise that the brand can then also dissociate themselves with the problems highlighted in recent investigations as they can just now say it was the manufacturer's fault and the issues will be further distanced from consumer eyes. The new format will allow smaller brands to be seen on an already established platform so they should have good policies on sustainability and employee standards to be accepted by Shein as a brand.

In the meantime, influencers are also under increasing criticism from environmental and workers' rights organisations for working with Shein, some even deciding to part ways as a result. If I was an influencer, and I was promoting Shein I believe I would want to stop working with them; however, I am not an influencer, and I will still shop at Shien because sadly like Drew Afualo said, "not everyone can afford to shop sustainably".

Kind Regards

### Moderator comment – Reading

#### Strengths:

- The candidate makes straightforward reference to explicit ideas and opinions in the text.
- There is some attempt to recognise ideas and opinions and offer personal opinions in response.

#### Weaknesses:

- There is a tendency for the candidate to raise questions, or make assertions, rather than offering an explanation or exploration of the points that they have identified.
- There is a tendency to simply repeat ideas and information from the text.
- There is some lifting from the text.

This response meets the criteria for Level 3 and is awarded a mark of 6.

#### Areas for improvement:

- An alternative text should have been considered where the candidate could challenge ideas and opinions to demonstrate understanding of how writers influence readers. Simply agreeing with and repeating the writer's ideas limit the scope of the response to demonstrate reading skills.
- The candidate needed to provide more developed and detailed comments about the points they had identified in the text.

## Moderator comment – Writing

### Strengths:

- The meaning of the response can usually be followed.
- There is an attempt to structure the response using paragraphs, but the sequence relies on the original text.
- The vocabulary is reliant on the original text but most spelling is correct.
- There is some awareness of audience and purpose.

### Weaknesses:

- There is a great deal of awkward expression caused by grammatical errors and errors in sentence structures.
- The style is too informal at times including the salutation and valediction.
- The writing is too reliant on the original text with some copying.

This response meets the criteria for Level 3 and is awarded a mark of 6.

### Areas for improvement:

- More marks could have been awarded had adopted a more measured and thoughtful tone and style with their writing.
- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had engaged in a thorough process of proofreading in order to identify and correct errors with punctuation and grammar.

**Mark awarded for reading = 6 out of 15 (Level 3)**

**Mark awarded for writing = 6 out of 15 (Level 3)**

**Total marks awarded = 12 out of 30**

## 6. Assignment 2 examples

### Example 1

**Title:** Pongal Homecoming

#### Title: Pongal Homecoming

The worn-out rubber tyres of our old beater rattle along the unpaved, gritty gravel road, each dip in the pothole sending a jolt through the vehicle. The car's suspension groans as we lurch over uneven patches; I feel every rock and rut through the thin foam seat padding. Clouds of fine, golden dust billow up with every turn of the wheels, streaming through the open windows and settling on my skin like a prickling itching powder. Wisps of warm, coarse dust chafe my nostrils, igniting a persistent tickling sensation. Outside, the Pattukottai Village scenery unfolds like a moving painting as the bumpy road leads us through narrow lanes bordered by sprawling fields of emerald-green paddy.

Colossal coconut palm trees stand like sentinels, their slender trunks painted with black snake designs to ward off nature's intruders. A herd of goats crosses the road, their bells jingling merrily, guided by a young boy wearing a beige-white frayed *baniyan* (vest) wielding a long oak-stick. A group of dark-complexioned young women move with grace; their footsteps are rhythmic as if performing a traditional dance. Their weathered hands carry bundles of freshly harvested wheat while little shirtless boys dash barefoot, chasing after bicycle tyres, striking them with sticks to keep them rolling along the musby grass.

As the car winds through the village lanes, the air feels alive with celebration. Small, palm-atched huts stand in neat rows along the narrow village path, their walls made of sunbaked clay and cow dung chosen for its anti-bacterial properties. The floors of these huts are decorated with intricate *kolam* (floor drawings) designs—a kaleidoscope of colours. Sugarcane-stalks and festooned marigolds are tied to the front wooden pillars of the huts.

In one courtyard, a family gathers around a large clay pot set over an open fire. The pot is filled with rice, milk, cashews, and *jaggery* (a mixture of sugarcane and palm tree sap), simmering to create the sweet Pongal rice dish that serves as the centrepiece of the festival. The word "Pongal" means "to boil," representing both the preparation of the dish and the festival's celebration of the rice harvest. Halters lead the cows, adorned with garlands of chrysanthemums, into the courtyard, their horns painted canary-yellow and scarlet. Children hover over the pot, eagerly waiting to scream 'Pongalo Pongal!' when the milk boils over and to offer prayers to the *Surya*, the sun god, thanking him for the prosperous harvest.

A minuscule mud-walled shack with a roof meticulously woven from dried palm leaves, comes in view, nestled under the protection of a towering banyan tree. The entrance is adorned with a freshly-drawn *kolam*, a simple, elegant geometric pattern, hand-drawn with rice flour—the *kolam's* white lines illuminated against the reddish-brown ground infested with a colony of red ants.

My grandmother (our Matriarch) awaits us at the entrance, draped in a quercitron-yellow saree shimmering in the morning light. The car's engine sputters to a halt. As I step onto the dusty ground, the warm sand crunches beneath my feet. My grandmother rushes towards me, her eyes ablaze with joy. Her *Kanchipuram* silk saree is embellished with elaborate golden work, polychromatic motifs, and sparking stones that glisten against the glimpse of light. Her *pallu* (the loose end of the saree) is neatly pleated and pinned over her shoulder, cascading down her back and showcasing vibrant patterns. Her blouse, contrasting deep maroon, tightly-fits around her chest, embroidered with golden thread. Around her waist, she wears a traditional *oddiyanam* (gold waist chain), which complements her saree pleats. Her jewellery is breathtaking: humungous gold *jimikki* (traditional earrings); her heavy gold martial necklace ends with a pendant engraved with a deity shape. Several thin gold bangles clink softly on her wrists.

She leads me into the hut, her flattering movements defying her age. The mud walls provide a cooling effect against the scorching heat outside. A row of monochrome portraits of grim-faced ancestors, each a dedicated farmer, hangs solemnly on the wall. Parted from their silent, severe expression, they softened as they were by the year between then and now, bearing many generations of fiercely loyal land. Every black-and-white image displays heartfelt tales of their years on the land—ranging from one amongst an earlier agriculturalist in worn overalls to at least one among a chuckling couple next to their barn. Over the generations, with advancements in technology pushing through like wildfire, each photograph has taken a glow up coming to life and bringing our ancestors's faces into sharper focus.

Shelves decked with arranged clay pots and copper utensils are stationed in a cozy corner along with a small altar where deity pictures are decorated with freshly-plucked jasmine flowers, which emit a pleasant fragrance throughout the room. We sit down for an abundant feast on top of the woven mat laid over the icy cement.

Freshly sliced and rinsed banana leaves are spread out before being stacked up with various hot savouries: spicy *sambar*, stir-fried plantains, tangy *Rasam*, crunchy golden-brown *vadas*, along with the sweet Pongal. With each mouthful, my senses tingle over the barrage of anticipation, bringing back memories of the hut where I grew up with my grandma.

### Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

#### Strengths:

- The candidate provides many well-defined ideas and images and creates an engaging and convincing description of a visit to their grandmother.
- Descriptions of the scenery on the journey, the arrival, their grandmother's appearance and her home, and the food prepared for the occasion provide close observation and a variety of focus points fully engaging the reader.
- The structure of the response takes the reader on the journey with the writer.
- Paragraphs are carefully managed to signpost the reader through the narrator's journey.

#### Weaknesses:

- The response would have benefited from some further editing. For example, the third paragraph on the second page is less effective in terms of description.

This response meets the criteria for Level 6 and is awarded a mark of 9.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Full consistency in terms of content and structure would have led to a mark at the top of Level 6.

**Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy**

**Strengths:**

- Most of the vocabulary is well chosen and used with precision to create specific effect.
- The candidate has made an effective use of varied sentence structures and there is a consistently effective use of language throughout the response.
- Overall, the writing achieves a high level of accuracy with very occasional slips.

**Weaknesses:**

- There are a few errors which could have been corrected by careful proofreading (e.g. 'hangs' rather than 'hang' on page 2).
- There is slightly awkward expression in the third paragraph of page 2 where the writing is less effective and engaging.

This response meets some of the criteria for Level 6 and is awarded a mark of 13.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Higher marks from Level 6 could have been awarded if the high level of fluency and accuracy had been maintained throughout the response.

**Mark awarded for content and structure = 9 out of 10 (Level 6)**

**Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 13 out of 15 (Level 6)**

**Total marks awarded = 22 out of 25**



## Example 2

Title: The Garden of Unreal Splendours

## The Garden of Unreal Splendours

The golden radiance from the sun descends over the flower beds and into the meadows, unveiling nature's true beauty. The cozy lush green leaves held me in their grasp like soft, fluffy pillows. Swish Swoosh! Soft rustling of the leaves tickles my ears, as the scenery before me sends a wave of familiarity.

Sun-kissed from the sun that stands proud in the sky. In god's glowing eye, the sun is guiding humans and safeguarding the world's beauty. Shafts of burning sunlight pour into the crystal-clear water, highlighting the shimmering glow coming from the surface of the stream.

It is like a sparkly gown, overflowing with glitter that could blind an eye. Gentle ripples follow with the fast current of the water under the soft caress of my fingertips, a cool sensation brushing against me. Each ripple of water captures a fragment of the sunlight, lingering upon the surface with a golden hue. The silky sky-blue river flows with graciousness and elegance, letting out soft murmurs that forms into a lullaby. As the river flows, it stretches out to the catastrophic boom of flowers that is noticeable from miles away.

I stroll towards the flowers that are dazzling and flourishing beautifully under the gleaming sunlight. Almost as if the sun has planted a golden kiss on the petals. As my fingers grace the contours of the petal, the velvety and delicate surface which folds under a touch, like a rare diamond in the wild. The flowers emit a carnival of different fresh, saccharine and musky smells that linger in the air. The intoxicating fragrance, an alternate universe where all time is frozen, hypnotizing anyone with the powerful essence of the blooming flowers.

As I follow that alluring fragrance, a clear view of the colourful frivolous flowers awaits to make their greeting. Spots of yellow, purple, blue blind onlooker's eyes as they stand out in the boring glade-green field. Some were tangerine and have a light citrusy

fragrance, adding that burst of vibrant energy to the landscape. In contrast to the lavenders, that have psychedelic blue hues on the edges of the petals. Together, the flowers form a mixture of all the warm colours of the rainbow, merging harmoniously with each other. Bees and butterflies prance and dance around the buds in unison, savouring the sweet nectar from the flowers.

None  
alteration  
clearer!

Ahead of the flowers, stands the massive weeping willow trees. Nature blesses these trees with majestic and modest as they bow with poise. Their long flowy branches sway in the wind, slightly susurrating. Shades of green and brown on the branches shine through the sun teasing in and out of the skinny branches. They cascade a silky green thread, yielding a strong firm grip, inviting a warm embrace to connect with their serene and stoic beauty. As I caress the soft long leaves, they recoil in my palm like a baby cooing in their mother's arms. The tress rock together in the breeze, emphasizing softness and resilience, equilibrating the liveliness of the garden.

Purification

? Up on the small hills, burnt-orange leaves. Each ready to set off on a journey, scattering messily in the malachite-green field. They have a kaleidoscope of vermillion, ginger and mustard yellow whisked with a dull burned umber. A subtle, woody and earthy scent emanates from the leaves, dainty and refined to precision. My ears pick up the slight whispers within the leaves rustling with the breeze, whispering with the pleasing symphony of the birds chirping.

In the far reaches, a poised yet sophisticated bridge spans over the river, covered in a dusty brown colour, with moss enveloping every inch of its appearance. The bridge representing the seasons that had gone by, worn out by the countless passers-by walking over it. It is rustic yet has so much determination, ready to lead the path of one's life. Standing tall and mighty, the bridge blends right into the picturesque setting. I hop up the bridge and am

impressed by the cotton-candy-like clouds. Hues of blazing hot red to fading pastel pink engulf the sky, creating a breath-taking panorama of colours. The sunlight pours its liquid gold into the clouds, making them glisten and stand out in the lovely azure-blue sky, inviting visitors to step in its fantasy.

Nightfall feels like decades away...

As soon as the patchy clouds clear from the sky, I awe at the grand majestic castle, in the clasp of the shining golden sunlight. Like a castle in a fairytale, towers of the palace reach up to the heavens, adorned in the glint of the sunlight. The castle is a masterpiece of man's hard work and craftsmanship, radiating a sense of splendour and timelessness to the atmosphere.



Each piece of this luscious garden balances, pleasantly coming together as nature's power to shine a bright future for the years ahead.

A wave of emotions come over me, but one emotion standing out in the crowd.

It is gratitude. Gratitude that the world still has this untouched piece of land that is shielded from the world's sinister malevolence.

Repetition for effect

✓ w1 w4.

✓ w1

### Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

#### Strengths:

- The candidate has provided some well-chosen images and details which give a mostly convincing picture (for example, the use of sensory description).
- The overall structure is well-managed with the use of well linked paragraphs which guide the reader through the narrator's journey through the garden.
- The candidate successfully creates a sense of atmosphere and place.

#### Weaknesses:

- This is an ambitious response which sometimes leads to overworked description where the images are less convincing or effective for the reader (for example, 'shafts of burning sunlight' creating a 'shimmering glow' or the willow trees being both 'majestic and modest' and their leaves 'cooing like a baby in their mother's arms').
- At times the structure falters slightly towards the end of the piece.

This response meets the criteria for Level 5 and is awarded a mark of 8.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The candidate could have gained more marks if they had achieved greater overall cohesion in all paragraphs.
- The overworked language in this piece could have been improved by simplifying some of the writing to make the images used more effective.

## Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

### Strengths:

- Most of the vocabulary used by the candidate is precise and used for specific effect.
- The language used is mostly effective and engaging.
- spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate.

### Weaknesses:

- At times there is a tendency to overwork language (for example, 'letting out soft murmurs that forms into a lullaby', 'frivolous flowers', 'an alternative universe where all time is frozen').
- There are occasions where sentences structures are incorrect, which impacts on the overall effect on the reader (for example, the first sentence in the second paragraph and the first sentence in the sixth paragraph).
- There are occasional awkward expressions caused by grammatical errors (for example, 'the sun descends...'. 'I awe at the grand majestic castle...').

This response meets some of the criteria for Level 5 and is awarded a mark of 10.

### Areas for improvement:

- The candidate could have gained more marks if they had shown greater control with their sentence structures and used language more precisely at times.
- More careful proof-reading would have improved the overall accuracy and fluency of the writing.

**Mark awarded for content and structure = 8 out of 10 (Level 5)**

**Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 10 out of 15 (Level 5)**

**Total marks awarded = 18 out of 25**

### Example 3

**Title:** The Shopping Mall

## The Shopping Mall

When I arrived at the shopping mall, I could see crowds of people flocking into the mall, faces filled with joy. As for the entrance, it seemed grand like I was entering the king of England's palace. The choice of colour of the mall was quite elegant and it was a gleaming white.

It was a scorching day so when I entered the mall it was a massive relief as three enormous air conditioners blasted me with that soothing cold air.

I entered from the main entrance and saw that the place was brimming with coffee shops and clothing stores. As I walked around, I could hear the screams of children and the moans of parents being dragged around the mall.

I walked through the mall but it was a struggle after all there wasn't much breathing room and everyone was elbow-to-elbow so I decided to sit down and drink some coffee in Costa. I was greeted with love and respect and seated in a lovely spot; I could see most of the mall.

I noticed someone quite peculiar, he was wearing jeans that were partially ripped with spiked chains attached to it, while his shirt had skulls and the grim reaper printed all over it. He had a choker around his neck and a guitar strap on his shoulder as he left the music store, my overall impression is that he looks like the type to appreciate heavy metal.

After I had finished my rich brown coffee I went to do some shopping, but when I entered my favourite clothing store, Zara.

I saw chaos! People racing about the store like headless chickens; rushing to be the first at the counter, after all, there was a summer sale. I tried to shop peacefully but I couldn't as with every step I took further into the store I could hear cries of people calling the employees asking them for a different size, I could see a sea of clothes on the ground, shopping carts full of clothes that were so vibrant you would think they were hauling neon signs and worst of all I could hear a sound so deafening, so ear-piercing, something that instilled fear to anything that heard it, that sound was the cry of a new-born baby!

I promptly exited the store dissatisfied with my experience so I decided I would do something productive like buying groceries. So I charged over to Carrefour to get my groceries but when I entered I realized something. That the order of the lanes is all planned out so that you end up buying stuff that you didn't even come for.

So as I was walking through the store I kept that in mind. I also noticed that they only had large shopping carts and the vast majority of the people had filled them to the brim, unlike the people who have shopping lists whose carts were nowhere near full and when you compared their carts, it looked like you were comparing the size of a human and a blue whale.

As I walked through shoving the groceries into my shopping cart I noticed that the prices of different companies which sold the same produce varied depending on the ingredients used, as when I looked at the back of the product that was more expensive. I saw that companies have been toying with us for an extremely long time because at the back the ingredients weren't gibberish but were written in English.

In the case of the cheaper one, it was not the same. In fact, all the ingredients were written in something that resembled morse code to the average joe. They both had something in common. One of the companies that were listed as the owners there was one company that was on both products and it was the same with every single product variant in Carrefour.

After a while of shopping, I finally reached the cashier, the lines were humongous! It looked like people were camping out for black Friday. It took a whopping thirty minutes to reach the end of the line. I left the store with bags the size of two newborns.

I was satisfied with my experience in the mall so I thought I would call it a day and head home, so I ordered my taxi and waited for them to arrive.

### Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

#### Strengths:

- The candidate provides a series of straightforward details when describing a visit to a shopping mall
- Structure is mostly organised as a linear account of the visit from arriving to departing.
- There is very occasional use of figurative language which works (for example, 'a sea of clothes on the ground').

#### Weaknesses:

- Although there is some attempt to develop the description it is mostly factual recall of details so limited in its use of descriptive features.
- There is a tendency to 'tell' rather than 'show' the reader the imagined scene.
- Attempts to use images are largely unsuccessful for example, 'people racing around the store like headless chickens', 'clothes that were so vibrant you would think they were hauling neon signs').
- The style of the response is largely narrative.
- Although the structure is mostly organised, the paragraphing is not always effective.

This response meets the criteria for Level 4 and is awarded a mark of 4.

#### Areas for improvement:

- More marks could have been achieved if the candidate had adopted a more descriptive style.
- Greater use of descriptive techniques such as figurative language, sensory imagery and close observation would have improved the piece.

### Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

#### Strengths:

- The candidate uses simple or functional vocabulary for most of the piece.
- There is some attempt to vary sentences for effect.
- There are also some attempts to use punctuation for effect (e.g. exclamation marks).

#### Weaknesses:

- Although there is an attempt to vary sentences for effect, the candidate loses control of the longer sentences.
- The attempt to use complex punctuation such as semi-colons is limited in its success and suggests insecurity in the candidate's understanding of how to use punctuation.
- Errors with punctuation and grammar are frequent and at times serious.

This response meets the criteria for Level 3 and is awarded a mark of 6.

**Areas for improvement:**

- To gain higher marks the candidate needs to demonstrate a greater security in their understanding of how to use punctuation, vocabulary and paragraphs for different purposes and effects.

**Mark awarded for content and structure = 4 out of 10 (Level 4)**

**Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 6 out of 15 (Level 3)**

**Total marks awarded = 10 out of 25**



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## 7. Assignment 3 examples

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### Example 1

**Title:** Death is a Familiar Face

#### Death is a Familiar Face

James Neil was accustomed to the smell of death that lingered in the hospital hallways as a surgeon; watching the life slowly fade from his patients - some well into their lives while others just beginning to open their eyes - was integrated into his daily routine. But never, in a million years, could he fathom his own hands would bring death to a child.

It wasn't his fault. He was drowning under an avalanche of appointments, meetings and papers. Those four shots of caffeine before the operation were crucial to keep his eyes open, he had already been awake for the past two days with barely a wink of sleep - the life of a surgeon was merciless. At least that's what he told himself. He should have known this would later come back to bite his back.

His patient was a child, only nine. His childhood as well as his breath were stolen by a disease eating away at his debilitated lungs that no amount of prescriptions could remedy so his parents seized the quickest opportunity for a lung transplant despite the abundance of high risks it bore. What other choice did they have?

A mere few hours ago, the boy looked up at Dr. Neil with innocence almost as if he was his superhero, as if he was going to save him from his misery but Dr. Neil saw it as one more thing to check off his to-do list. Another pay-check. Work. His first mistake was the coffee: it shook through his veins which left him jittery, his hands losing all dexterity and his mind a jumbled orchestra that had forgotten all its music sheets.

He didn't do anything wrong; he was overworked and in desperate need of a break. He was only human. Heart furiously pounding against his ribcage, he picked at the skin around his fingernails, the very same jittery fingers that slipped during an incision of a crucial artery. He recalled the way the heart monitor came to a spine-chilling stop, the way his bloodied hands froze, and his vision dazed. Memories of giving the nurses a fabricated explanation of why the operation failed overwhelmed him.

Now, he stood before the waiting room, bracing himself for the inevitable conversation with the distraught parents. His breaths came out in choked gasps, his hands shaking rapidly. *It wasn't his fault.* The family signed the contract, they *knew* the risks. He followed protocol. He underwent 12 years of schooling; he was by no means underqualified. Death was not on his hands. *Right?* He lurched forward, catching himself on the metal door.

Gingerly, he pushed the door a crack but as soon as his eyes fell on their faces, he wanted nothing more than to crawl into a hole and hide. The mother launched off her chair immediately, anxiously throwing questions at him hoping one of them would land her an answer; however, he had none that would satisfy the distressed expression she wore. What would he have said? Dr. Neil was pathetic at this moment. A PhD from the top medical school, a well respected position and branded watches were as good as nothing as the mother pleaded out sobs, fingers curling around his dry-cleaned thousand dollar coat. He opened his mouth, but his tongue failed him as he struggled to construct an explanation, or rather an apology.

"Please," the mother croaked, "Please, Doctor, my son-"

"His heart stopped."

Pin drop silence.

Like a siren going off, a gut-wrenching howl ripped from her heart as she collapsed to the ground, her hands finding their way to her hair and *pulling*. Her husband followed right after her, barely standing as he heaved and clenched at his chest as if his lungs were drowning. Dr. Neil felt like he had just been slapped in the face. The boy wanted to be a doctor. He wanted to save people, he said. *The boy wanted to be just like Dr. Neil when he grew up!* To think he was the one who took away his dreams, someone's son, a *person*. Dr. Neil felt his heart drop but as his eyes wandered around the room filled with other people grieving their loved ones, he finally realised that it didn't really matter anymore: this was a normal occurrence in his profession. Death was a familiar face. He was the one who signed up for this.

"There was nothing more I could've done."

He walked away, the waiting rooms doors slamming shut behind him consequently silencing the desperate wails of the couple which seemed to endlessly echo through the corridor, chasing him. Haunting him.

Now, he had a thirty minute break before his next patient. A shot of coffee should get his blood pumping for sure.

### Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

#### Strengths:

- The candidate creates a convincing and well-defined character whose thoughts and feelings are clear to the reader.
- The writing effectively navigates the protagonist's complex situation and conflicting emotions, which links well to the title of the piece.
- The narrative is skilfully crafted for deliberate effect on the reader with an effective and revealing ending.

#### Weaknesses:

- There are no weaknesses in content and structure.

This response meets the criteria for Level 6 and is awarded a mark of 10.

## Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

### Strengths:

- Vocabulary is well-chosen and precise, creating a convincing setting, situation and characters.
- The candidate makes use of varied sentence structures for specific effect (for example, the use of very short paragraphs to build and release tension).
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are nearly always accurate with very occasional slips.

### Weaknesses:

- Some expression is slightly awkward (for example, 'A mere few hours ago, the boy looked up at...').
- There is occasionally inconsistency in use of tenses (for example, 'He didn't do anything wrong' rather than 'he hadn't done anything wrong.').

This response meets most of the criteria for Level 6 and is awarded a mark of 14.

### Areas for improvement:

- Full marks could have been awarded if the candidate had engaged in a thorough and careful process of proofreading to identify and correct the very occasional errors.

**Mark awarded for content and structure = 10 out of 10 (Level 6)**

**Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 14 out of 15 (Level 6)**

**Total marks awarded = 24 out of 25**



## Example 2

**Title:** The magically potent sphere

### The magically potent sphere

Almost every person as a little child fantasizes about having supernatural abilities. How unfortunate it is that in our world there is nothing to make these dreams come true. Or is there?

Hunting season had begun and Khaleed, Waleed, and Thomas found themselves in the massive two and a half million square metre Amazon forest's early dawn (with the ambition of having a successful hunt) camping in the centre of poisonous black berry shrubs almost as if they were concealing them.

The sun's ray just made it past the thick leaves of the Mahogany tree. The bunch of three were woken up to the melodious chirping of the hummingbirds. Khaleed ignited a fire on the wooden planks beneath a stand with a large bubbling pot on it (effectively killing two birds with one stone [cooking the scrumptious curry whilst enjoying warmth from the fire]).

"Just great! The wood has run out. Could you go cut some wood, Waleed? Remember No wood, no breakfast."

Waleed sighed in displeasure. He went back to his tent to snatch his sledging axe. He vanished into the forest with his axe trailing behind him. The axe was making a swishing-swashing sound from the friction of it as it made contact with the sand.

While walking into the widespread forest, Waleed stumbled upon a colossal dead Oak tree. It puzzled him (he is a phytologist and nature enthusiast [but not to the extent of a tree hugger]) because this species of tree didn't in this forest. Curiosity got the better of him. So, he decided to move closer to examine it carefully. Waleed's eyes fell upon a golden light emerging from the seemingly hollow stem. He leaped forward to identify the source of the piercing golden light. The now-extremely-exhilarated Waleed struck his axe into the crack, expanding enough to make a bigger peep-whole. Suddenly, an image of a pit viper popping out stopped him dead in his track.

"But, soft, what if it treasures instead?" he sang

Waleed hurried back to the camp as he built luxurious in the air...

"Khaleed! Thomas! come with me! I think I've found treasureee! Hurry!" bellowed Waleed.

Both were startled. Since they trusted Honest Waleed and followed him back to the intriguing tree. Waleed scurried ahead of them, zig-zagging his way through the clumps of bushes as chubby Khaleed and skinny Thomas huffed and puffed far behind him. Abruptly, Waleed rapidly decelerated until he finally came to a halt right before colliding into the oak tree. Drenched in sweat he pointed to the hole in the centre of the tree. Khalid and Thomas were blown away by the majestic sparkles generated by the sharp rays of light piercing their eyes.

Thomas, though a toothpick, he had Simba the lion's heart and therefore he edged forward to take a closer look. He forced his right eye to close so that he could peer not the tiny hole. Gold embossed the edges of what looked like a box. His heart began to pound like it wanted to break free of his ribcage.

"Wow a treasure chest I am certain"

"Take it out now!" ordered Thomas in an arrogant tone.

The chest was surprisingly lightweight. A thick layer of dust surrounded its dark wooden body while the golden frames still maintained their lustre. A rusted padlock with the ancient pin tumbler system (an old Egyptian locking mechanism). With massive first blow from Waleed's axe the lock didn't budge. The chests secret remained intact, until the twenty first blow the padlock gave in. The musketeers' eyes flew open. Their heart rate soared as Khaleed flung the chest open with his trembling hands. All of them had a like minded vision of what they would see: GOLD. Billionaires. Jet-setting all around the globe.

The box was almost completely empty! Except, there was a tiny scroll residing in it. Khaleed no longer carried reflected a greedy expression. It had transitioned into a frown on his forehead and his lower lip rolled on his upper lip in disappointment. Waleed picked up the scroll and rolled it open, with his hopes down. The scroll had multiple black and brown stains on its caramel-coloured paper.

"The ability to manipulate your fate surely is the almighty power, isn't it? Having your loved ones back, simply follow these instructions below"

The three followed the instructions as it was their last hope to riches. After completing the instructions, dense fog fell upon the forest. Nothing could be seen. Invisibility prevailed. In a matter of seconds, the fog cleared. But this time clearing the forest leaving behind nothing but dry barren land. They were steeped in torment.

A spherical protuberance materialized from the ground. They crept closer to it analysing it as if it were an alien. As per the scrolls instructions they hesitantly laid their right hand on it. Their chests scintillated. A sonorous voice addressed each.

"Waleed, your heart tells me you have always dreamt of a cure of these deadly terminal diseases such cancer. Granted!"

"Khaleed, your heart bleeds in wish to solder your devoted parents together. Granted!"

"Thomas, don't you love being the head of a country that is almighty. Granted!"

## Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

### Strengths:

- The content is relevant with some development of plot.
- There are some features of narrative writing, such as the setting of scene, characterisation, and direct speech.
- There is an attempt to differentiate between characters through using contrasts.
- Structure is generally managed as a linear narrative.

### Weaknesses:

- The ending is a little contrived which leaves the reader feeling slightly dissatisfied.
- The plot is rather ambitious and generally unconvincing as it is outside the imagined experience of the candidate.
- The overuse of brackets to relay extra information to the reader indicates some insecurity with structure.

This response meets the criteria for Level 4 and is awarded a mark of 6.

### Areas for improvement:

- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had simplified the plot to make it more convincing.
- More marks could have been awarded if the ending had been more satisfying for the reader.

## Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

### Strengths:

- The candidate uses vocabulary with some precision and for specific effect (for example, 'melodious chirping', 'piercing golden light', 'rapidly decelerated', 'sonorous voice').
- There is an attempt to use a range of sentence structures to create specific effect.
- There is some awareness of the reader.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation are generally accurate with some errors which do not affect communication.

### Weaknesses:

- There is some imprecise use of vocabulary (for example, 'scintillated', 'luxurious').
- There is awkward expression caused by grammatical errors and word omissions (for example, 'Waleed hurried back to the camp as he built luxurious in the air...', 'Thomas, though a toothpick, he had Simba the lion's heart...').
- Although the writing can be classed as generally accurate, there are some errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

This response meets some of the criteria for Level 4 and is awarded a mark of 8.

### Areas for improvement:

- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had carefully proofread their work to identify and correct errors.

**Mark awarded for content and structure = 6 out of 10 (Level 4)**

**Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 8 out of 15 (Level 4)**

**Total marks awarded = 14 out of 25**

### Example 3

#### Title: Life Giving Lessons

##### Life Giving Lessons

From around 11 years old, Sander had always wanted to be a professional tennis player and was a great talent. At the age of 14 he joined the David Ferrer Academy in Spain, being Estonian he found himself far from home, away from his family and learning in two different languages. School was in English, but the tennis coaches however spoke only Spanish and Sander found himself living in a permanent state of confusion, never fully understanding everything that was going on around him. Luckily, Sander didn't let the situation frustrate him and accepted that eventually it would all come together.

After just a year in Spain, Sander could grasp both Spanish and English and he also loved his tennis training making many new friends. There were many more talented players in Spain than in his native Estonia, this also made him rethink his future. He had doubts that he would not make it, not because he wasn't talented enough but because there were so many more that were just as talented if not more talented than him. Many of the older players had opted to go to America to play at college the prospect of this started to appeal to Sander more and more. At first Sander only thought of the big colleges the ones that everybody had heard of – Stanford, Harvard, USC, and UCLA. All Division 1 colleges and many players on the professional tour had begun their career there. Sander hadn't quite given up on his professional aspirations.

It wasn't until a coach spoke to Sander and said, "you do realise that to get into one of these colleges you have to not only be of near professional level, but you also have to have great academic grades, not to mention the costs of living in such a prestigious environment!". Sander just shrugged this comment off and thought he will be ok and continued the way he had before.

When the time came to sit his exams, Sander didn't revise as much as he should have, didn't put in as much effort to his coursework as he could have, meaning he didn't get the results that he would have, if he had done all these things. Nevertheless, he applied to colleges ranking Stanford as his number one choice and then going down the list the things of importance were the location – sunny Florida, or California based so he could continue to play tennis outdoors. This was something that he could never do in Estonia as a child, when he had watched all the grand slams on TV, they were always played in the summer months, and it was always warm. It was part of the reason he left for Spain in the first place, to play in New York in a sports hall seemed to be a backward step in his career.



The colleges he wanted rejected him, some didn't even reply. Sander was disappointed, almost to the point where he thought it was best to give up tennis altogether. Dejected he went back to his coach to seek some advice on what options he had now he didn't get into any college let alone the ones he wanted. The coach said to Sander "it seems like you don't realise that the people who got the places didn't just get picked out of a hat, they had to work hard- really, really hard not just in tennis but also in school. You must accept that your tennis level is not as good as theirs and your grades are not either. Truly ask yourself if you did everything you could, if the answer is yes then I understand your disappointment. If the answer is no, then you must accept that there is nobody to blame for your current position and your only choice now is what you are going to do about it".

Upon reflection, Sander knew his coach was right, he had not understood the biggest assignment of his life. He had to do more if he wanted to reach the top of his game, the first step was to improve his tennis rating which made him more appealing to colleges. Academically doing some

resits to improve his grades and accepting a less prestigious division 1 college that met his overall goals.

Four years later after completing his degree in San Jose, California, Sander then spent the summer back on the professional tour, playing better, getting better results than before and overall, with a more disciplined approach, with more maturity that his college experience had given him. Everybody has a different journey, but it is certainly true that hard work beats talent if talent doesn't work hard!

### Moderator comment – Composition: Content and Structure

#### Strengths:

- The content of the narrative is straightforward and briefly developed.
- There is a clear attempt to organise the writing in a linear style using paragraphs logically.

#### Weaknesses:

- There is a limited use of the features of narrative writing; the candidate writes in a more informative than narrative style.
- The events within the response are narrated with very little awareness of the reader.
- The response requires the candidate to cover a number of years of the character's life in a very superficial way and the response lacks effective pacing. This prevents the reader from engaging with the narrative.
- There is little attempt to develop a character for Sander or explore his thoughts and feelings in a convincing way.

This response meets the criteria for Level 3 and is awarded a mark of 4.

#### Areas for improvement:

- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had used more features of narrative writing.
- More originality, and therefore marks, could have been awarded if the candidate had written about an adventure that they had experienced personally (e.g. a camping trip with their family, a white-water rafting experience).

## Moderator comment – Composition: Style and Accuracy

### Strengths:

- There is a little use of precise vocabulary for specific effect (e.g. 'scattered' banana trees in paragraph three, 'flint' and 'foraged' in paragraph four).
- There is an attempt to use a range of sentences for effect.
- Spelling is accurate and meaning is clear.

### Weaknesses:

- The vocabulary used is generally adequate and straightforward.
- Although there is an attempt to use a range of sentences, they are not always secure in construction with errors both within and between sentences. There is some comma splicing leading to long unwieldy sentences.
- The language used tends to be more informative than narrative in style due to the straightforward nature of the writing.
- There are errors in punctuation and grammar.

This response meets the criteria for Level 3 and is awarded a mark of 6.

### Areas for improvement:

- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had successfully used a wider range of vocabulary and sentences for specific effect.
- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had demonstrated a greater understanding of how to construct sentences.
- More marks could have been awarded if the candidate had used language in a more interesting way to engage the reader.

**Mark awarded for content and structure = 4 out of 10 (Level 3)**

**Mark awarded for style and accuracy = 6 out of 15 (Level 3)**

**Total marks awarded = 10 out of 25**

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