

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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<p>Paper 1120/01 Writing</p>
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## Key messages

- Attention should be given to the full requirements of each bullet point in **Section 1**; the word **and**, in bold type, indicates two parts to the bullet point. It should not be assumed that the answer to the second half of the bullet is implied by what has been said before.
- For both of the Writing tasks it is useful for candidates to familiarise themselves with the band descriptors in the Mark Scheme, to use as a guide to improving the effectiveness of their responses.
- The use of correct tenses and agreement would improve the work of the majority of candidates. Correct punctuation (full stops, commas) and a more varied use of punctuation (colons, semi-colons, and exclamation marks) would also raise the level of most responses.
- Poor handwriting can impact on performance. This is very true of copying in pen over a rough draft in pencil. Illegible handwriting and excessive crossings out often make a point difficult to follow.
- Idiomatic phrases can be impressive when used sparingly. Candidates should be wary of using complex vocabulary unless their use is fully understood.

## General comments

Covid-19 restrictions may have had an impact on the overall performance of candidates. In the circumstances, candidates did extremely well but it was evident from the unusual number of very short or unfinished answers that some candidates may have struggled to perform at their best. Some of the writing was very difficult to decipher, some was illegible and there were many crossings out. There was, however, some extremely high-quality writing and performance on Task Fulfilment in **Section 1** was very strong. This year, in **Section 2**, all the titles, apart from **Question 2**, were popular and there was another increase in the number of candidates taking on the Argument titles.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section 1: Directed Writing

#### Question 1

In **Section 1**, most candidates performed well on Task Fulfilment. The task required them to imagine an increase in the number of tourists in their area and to write a report to the local council giving their views. Candidates had to be aware that, to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points, a response required:

- the advantages of more tourists visiting the local area
- the disadvantages of more tourists visiting the local area
- which disadvantage the local council should deal with first **and** how they should deal with it.

For **bullet point 1**, successful candidates gave a number of advantages. More tourists provided more income for local businesses, a great relief after the pandemic, and led to more jobs so that unemployment decreased. The infrastructure of the region was improved, with roads, hospitals, schools and new attractions being built as the economy was made stable. Candidates suggested that the local area received more recognition globally as tourists posted pictures on social media. There was an increased awareness of each other's culture which often improved harmony between people. The bullet point asked for more than one advantage and most candidates provided at least two of those detailed above. Some weaker responses included just one advantage, usually about increased income. Stronger responses gave examples such as shops which had prospered and new jobs which had arisen within the tourism industry. Weaker responses

merely featured a list of advantages without further expansion or comment. Also, some candidates talked about the advantages *for* the tourists, rather than the advantages that increased tourism brought to the area.

Candidates were extremely clear in **bullet point 2** about the disadvantages brought by more tourists. By far the most obvious was the problem of litter and the wider problem of pollution. Various packaging from fast food made the local area untidy, unhygienic and dangerous for wildlife; the use of plastic in so many items meant that beaches and marine creatures were badly affected. Crime was now more obvious and local flora and fauna suffered with the building of new infrastructure. There was also the problem of noise pollution with rowdy tourists playing music late at night. Congestion, with people on narrow streets and with cars on highways, made normal life impossible. Furthermore, local hotels were exclusively occupied by tourists making life difficult for local people. Added to this was the rise in prices caused by the influx of tourists and local people often found themselves priced out of the market. For some, the dilution of culture, referred to as the demonstration effect, was a worrying development as younger people copied western styles and habits. Worse still were those tourists who appeared ignorant of the requirements of local religious practices and seemingly unsympathetic towards the local culture. A small number of candidates confused tourists with immigrants and raised homes and businesses being overtaken by foreigners. Again, most candidates indicated at least two disadvantages as the bullet point required. However, some weaker responses were limited to only one disadvantage, and this made it difficult in **bullet point 3** to choose a priority.

For **bullet point 3**, candidates were asked to indicate which was the most serious disadvantage. They usually did this by lifting the word *first* from the bullet point, but some used the words *main* or *priority* or something similar to convey this. Some used the bullet point as a heading to the paragraph. Some implied it by dealing with just the one disadvantage in this section and so it was clear to the reader. There was nothing wrong with dealing with more than one disadvantage here, as long as one of them was specified as the priority. This was usually the first disadvantage the candidate had highlighted under **bullet point 2**. Some responses were significantly weakened by including more than one disadvantage and failing to make it clear which was the priority.

There were many different solutions to how the problem should be dealt with. The main ones were providing signs to educate tourists, implementing fines, providing more rubbish bins, reducing the use of plastics, building more roads and having a two-tier price system in shops so that prices were fairer to local people – *The problem of littering should be dealt with first to secure the beauty of the mountains. This can be done by first cleaning the area and then putting a hefty fine on littering.* Weaker responses failed to be sufficiently specific and fell back on the idea of simply limiting the number of tourists. Weaker still were those responses which offered no specific suggestion and instead urged the council to *do something* about the problem.

In **bullet points 1, 2 and 3**, responses were particularly strong in terms of avoiding too much unnecessary narrative, relying on shorter examples to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages rather than lengthy background detail – *Taxi drivers also earn profits by doing tours.*

Generally, there was a very good awareness of **purpose** and **situation** and candidates were very clear about what they were doing in this text. The intended **audience** was the local council, although some candidates did not seem sure whether this was a single person or a group. The **tone** and **register** were very well maintained this year by most and kept properly formal and polite to acknowledge the formal situation. The correct **format**, a formal one, was employed by the vast majority, although there were several versions of a formal report. Many strong responses featured a highly structured format with a heading, a date, a signature and also a sub heading and paragraph or section headings. Many adopted a formal letter style which was acceptable while weaker responses mixed the report and letter formats. Most candidates followed the structure provided by the bullet points for their organisation, sometimes together with a very short opening and closing paragraph, and this gave a sensible progression to their response. Overall, most wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1**, but it was very noticeable this year that there were many short responses in **Section 1**, even when an attempt had been made at **Section 2. Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when candidates suggested what could be done in **bullet point 3**.

Linguistically, most candidates produced a convincing piece of work and there was some very good vocabulary, for example *artisanal products*; *influx of sightseers*; and *the global economy*. Ideas were well structured with the use of markers such as *Firstly* and *Finally*.

Weaker responses included persistent use of the singular *tourist*, even though the plural word *tourists* was given in the task which often led to problems of agreement. Spelling was generally satisfactory but punctuation less so, especially with missing capital letters.

## Section 2 Composition

### Question 2

**Describe two different possessions which are very important to your family – one which is useful and one which is for decoration. (Remember you can describe the possessions, how your family got them and why they are so important to your family).**

This question elicited some interesting description, emphasising the importance of items associated with deceased family members and therefore looked upon with much love and affection. Some of the *useful* possessions related to cooking and other areas of everyday life such as transport – one or two candidates mentioned classic cars, owned by the family. The *decoration* items were again often linked to long gone family members, such as jewellery passed down from generation to generation. Fishing rods, bags, paintings and a medal were further examples and there was pride and excitement evident regarding the beauty of the items mentioned. Responses employed some rich imagery and explored the relevant narrative detail behind the possessions – *The pot began its journey down the family tree....; .... charred black from the countless wars... .* Very few responses focused only on one possession, although sometimes the material concentrated much more on the first chosen possession. Responses focused on atmosphere and specific detail and how and why such items were of value. The fact that it was two possessions helped candidates to structure their answers as a contrast. Many candidates failed to notice however that one should be useful and the other decorative. There were also some misunderstandings noted, when *possessions* were taken as meaning *achievements*, *locations lived in* or even *the parents of the candidate*. Those candidates who employed the use of adjectives and the senses did well on this question. Much of the vocabulary was very good – *sealed*, *transparent... in a deep slumber* – but weaker candidates did rely on less sophisticated words such as *clean*.

### Question 3

**‘People try too hard to be like other people. It is much better to concentrate on being yourself.’ How far do you think this is true? Give reasons and examples to support your view.**

In these responses, there was a lot of concern with so called role models and celebrities. Candidates were able to explore the topic with familiarity and confidence demonstrating their general knowledge and awareness of the world from a young person’s perspective. It was generally agreed that young people spent too much time thinking about and trying to be something they were not and could never be. The focus was on the pressure of examinations and being an adolescent and how troublesome that could be. There was also concern for the many individuals who did not have a goal or ambition so, in effect, they had nothing to aim for in the future and so latched on to famous people who they wanted to emulate. This might be in terms of how the celebrity spoke, what they wore or even how they looked. What came through in the writing was a sense of frustration with this lack of originality and this desire to copy but an inability to find an alternative path. Many candidates highlighted the power and influence of social media as a form of relaxation but also acknowledged what a waste of time it could be and how damaging it could be in the wrong hands. Candidates wanted to be true to themselves, but it was felt that often individuals lacked the money, the confidence, or the willpower to see that through. The counter argument was that copying role models for the right reasons could be a good thing; persevering or showing generosity could be of benefit to all. Overall, this question was tackled effectively with balanced arguments. Candidates focused on their own personal experience and also stood back from the subject and discussed it in the third person. Strong feelings came through on contemporary issues such as mental health, insecurities about physical attributes and low self-esteem. A common phrase to sum up the ideal was *the best version of yourself*.

### Question 4

**‘I believe everyone now should be forced by law to recycle.’ What is your opinion? Give reasons and examples to support your view.**

A knowledgeable minority of candidates demonstrated their interest and concern about the topic of recycling in their responses to this question. Some material from other subjects was used effectively here to provide examples and statistics. Some candidates used sophisticated terminology appropriately – *The societal pressure was...another dilemma*. Recycling was seen by many as fundamental to saving the planet and therefore it should be enforced by law. A few candidates were vociferous in the kind of punishments which should be issued should individuals break the law – *Companies should be more responsible....* There was concern for natural habitat, birds, and marine life and anger at the way many people polluted the countryside and the beach when we now have the ability to recycle so many of the items which used to be considered waste. Stronger responses discussed how this law could reasonably be enforced and soon saw the difficulty.

It was however encouraging to see the strength of feeling which the topic aroused. There was a strong call that we had to act now. Weaker responses could be repetitive, with some rehashing of phrases used in **Question 1** regarding litter and pollution. Good examples of arguments put forward were very helpful and strengthened candidates' responses to **Questions 3** and **Question 4**. Also, paragraphing which allows the argument to move forward logically, is vital in an Argument essay and is helped by appropriate paragraph openings, such as *On the other hand..*

### Question 5

**Write a story which includes the sentence: 'It wasn't what the woman said to me but the way she said it which made me hesitate.'**

This was by far the most popular title and seemed to appeal strongly to those who enjoy the horror genre. There were also romantic stories, thrillers, and supernatural tales. There were tales of intimidation; violence and rejected love; betrayal and friendship. The given sentence was invariably incorporated into the story successfully, whether it was placed at the beginning, in the middle of the story or at the climax. There were first person narratives and third person narratives. Endings were often unhappy and sometimes unfinished, although many were happy endings if the narrator escaped from their predicament. Whatever the outcome, the narratives were fast moving but often lacked description. The quote from the title encouraged the use of dialogue which brought life to responses – *Hey, you are finally here. Ready to leave?... Yeah. I was looking for you. Let's go.* It was generally employed correctly with candidates understanding the difference between indirect and direct speech. The woman in question was often seen as mysterious, powerful, or even dangerous. The narrator was often uneasy and suspicious and sometimes this caution was well founded. Occasionally the woman was a kind and a positive character. Stories suffered at times from a lack of realism and a desire to include too many events before the female protagonist appeared. Under timed conditions, simple stories with less plot work more effectively.

The best narrative responses are always characterised by an understanding of narrative structures, ambitious vocabulary, the control of tenses and by a variation in tone through the sparing use of dialogue. Weaker responses feature the opposite, a repetition of ideas, confused tenses and an overuse of simple sentence structures and vocabulary. Most candidates would have benefited from more variety in their punctuation, as long as it was accurate.

### Question 6

**Write a story about someone who moves back to their home town after a long time away and finds their new life there more difficult than expected.**

This was a popular choice among candidates and, as with **Question 5**, there were very many first-person narratives, and this helped to give a sense of involvement in the drama. There were plenty of 'cautionary tales' about people leaving their communities to make it rich and then being forced to return in poverty and disgrace. A common theme involved a person returning from, for example, the US or UK to their country of birth, only to find that their lifestyle in Western society had ill prepared them for the need to be independent, and free from the luxuries they were used to – *Lazily pressing the snooze button...* Most of these individuals subsequently returned to their easier lives in the West. A few candidates were able to invent subtle stories about success changing people and causing them to struggle with the social/cultural requirements of their home town but the majority focused on failed attempts at success and the consequent struggle with menial jobs and poverty.

Candidates would benefit from more practice in structuring a story and are encouraged to explore variety in opening techniques to engage the reader, the problem/complication, the events/characters, feelings and the resolution/climax during their planning.

As for **Question 5**, the strongest responses demonstrated a clear understanding of narrative structures, an ability to use ambitious vocabulary and to control tenses and a focus on varying tone through the sparing use of dialogue.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1120/02  
Reading

## Key messages

- Candidates should try to gain a clear, overall picture of both the passages *and* all questions through close reading before they begin to answer each section. In both sections of the Paper, close reading and careful attention to detail were the attributes which brought the best results.
- Candidates might find it helpful to underline or highlight key words in the question, e.g. **Question 3(a)** 'What was the first sign...' and **Question 8** 'Explain in your own words...'. This will ensure that their answers are focused and creditworthy.
- To achieve high marks for both **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)**, candidates are advised to focus on identifying, specifically, the main overarching points from the passage without the unnecessary inclusion of examples, repetition and extensions of those points.
- If examples are included in **Question 1(a)**, candidates need to identify them as such with the use of 'for example', 'such as' or 'like'. The use of brackets, dashes and slashes is to be avoided as these are not indicators of examples, nor is punctuation such as the colon, comma or semi-colon. Examples of this are 'can be used on several devices (smart television, tablet or smart phone)', and 'the pre-release hype of films is accompanied by merchandise – clothes, stationery and gadgets'. The former suggests that only the three devices identified can be used to stream; the latter suggests that only 'clothes, stationery and gadgets' accompany the pre-release hype.
- Candidates do not have to use their own words in **Question 1(a)**, and substitutions are not always appropriate. Therefore, it is recommended that candidates keep close to the wording of the passage for **Question 1(a)**.
- While candidates need to be encouraged to write succinctly and to avoid copying lengthy extracts from the text when answering **Question 1(a)**, they must also be aware that brevity can exclude vital information. For example, the answer 'pre-release hype of films' excludes 'merchandise' and 'heightens excitement', thus neglecting the advantage of this aspect of cinemas.
- Candidates are encouraged to write to the recommended length in **Question 1(b)**; overlong or short responses are self-penalising since they cannot satisfactorily fulfil the criteria for Relevance or Coherence.
- For **Question 1(b)**, candidates demonstrated an understanding of the importance of linking devices to establish coherence; it is essential that these are appropriate and also used selectively. Words and phrases which are not standard English, such as 'moreso' and 'to add on', are to be avoided. Similarly, expressions such as 'moving on', 'in a nutshell', 'by the way' or 'alongside' are not appropriate for a formal summary. Many candidates would benefit from further practice using appropriate linking devices to enable them to move from writing a competent summary to writing one which is skilful or impressive.
- In **Question 1(b)**, candidates are advised to use their own words and original structures, and they should be discouraged from copying complete sentences from the text.
- Candidates should be aware that accurate punctuation in **Question 1(b)**, particularly the accurate use of commas and full stops, can assist in the fluent and coherent presentation of content points.
- For **Question 2**, many responses successfully identified the pieces of advice in the non-fiction passage. Candidates should be reminded that **Question 2** is part of **Section 1** and refers to the first passage. Candidates are advised to copy the piece of advice exactly as it is given in the passage since attempts at paraphrasing can miss detail or include inappropriate alternatives. It was noticeable that some candidates were selecting opinions based on previous exam series. In **Question 2** candidates might be asked to identify opinions, advice, criticisms or warnings.
- To assist candidates in understanding Passage 2, regular reading of narrative texts and consideration of both explicit and inferential questions about characters and situations will help a great deal with all types of question in **Section 2**.
- There was evidence of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the questions in **Section 2**. Candidates need to spend time considering exactly what is being asked. Simply lifting from the passage rarely works; candidates need to rephrase the text in such a way that the question is clearly being answered.



- In the 'own words' questions, **Question 5(c)** and **Question 8**, candidates are advised to avoid repeating the key words in their response, and instead provide suitable synonyms for the given context. They should also note that the answers lie in the given phrase, rather than in the events in the narrative.
- In **Question 9**, the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates should be encouraged to try out each of the possible words and decide which is the most appropriate in the passage with which they are dealing. Candidates are asked to circle the correct letter. Occasionally other methods such as eliminating the incorrect answers or writing the letter in the margin resulted in ambiguous responses which could not be credited.
- In responding to the final question on the writer's craft, understanding of both literal and inferential writing is required. It was not always evident that candidates could distinguish between *meaning* and *effect*. Further practice on the approach to these questions would be beneficial. Candidates are advised to provide a straightforward literal meaning under 'Meaning' and for 'Effect' to go beyond the literal and comment on the impact or connotations of particular words or an image.

### **General comments**

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, each of approximately 700 words: the first entitled 'Cinemas and Streaming' and the second entitled 'A New Beginning'.

Many candidates attempted every question but there were also several candidates who offered no response.

Responses were, for the most part, clearly written. A few candidates who wrote to excess – in **Question 1(a)** particularly – wrote at the side or at the bottom of the page which can cause illegibility and should be avoided. If the response does not fit in the space provided, it must continue on an 'additional page' rather than being written in a random space in the question paper booklet.

The first non-fiction passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second fiction passage tested their reading for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary **Question 1**, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the passage, 'Cinemas and Streaming'. 10 marks were awarded for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well organised and easy to follow. Part of the skill of summary writing is writing economically; several responses exceeded the recommended word limit of 180 words.

In **Question 1(a)**, the majority of candidates adhered to the suggestion in the rubric that they might find it useful to use bullet points for their notes. Generally, responses demonstrated selectivity in extracting the relevant information. Practice in identifying the overarching points would benefit those candidates who feel the need to copy extensively from the text. In these cases, candidates often incorporate irrelevance or run out of space – both resulting in a loss of potential marks.

In **Question 1(b)**, there were 16 content points, including the given points, which candidates could refer to. Points not fully made are acceptable in **Question 1(b)**. To achieve Bands 4 or 5 for Relevance, a wide range of points must be included. For Bands 4 and 5 for Coherence, the summary must demonstrate significant stretches of fluent and accurate writing, with minimal communication-impeding errors at Band 5.

A further question, **Question 2**, allotted three marks to the testing of candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to identify three pieces of advice in three different paragraphs of the passage.

The second passage, 'A New Beginning', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. The remaining 25 marks for the Paper could be gained here.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### ***Section 1 Reading for Ideas***

**Question 1(a)** was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks. Candidates were asked to identify and write down the advantages of cinema and the advantages of streaming, as outlined in paragraphs 2 to 7 of the passage. Answers should be presented in note form and own words are not necessary. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark.

Excluding these two given points, there were 14 content points. Several responses achieved over 10 marks. These successful responses were expressed concisely, used bullet points as suggested and avoided repetition, unnecessary examples and additional information, while still ensuring that key words essential to making the point were included.

Less successful responses omitted overarching points and included irrelevant material, notably examples and repetition. It was not unusual for these responses to feature extensive copying from the text and then run out of space on the page.

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 described the advantages of cinemas and there were seven points (excluding the given point) which candidates could make. A few responses incorrectly expanded on the given point for their first content point, seemingly not recognising that the measurements of the 'huge screens' were irrelevant details. The first content point was the 'surround sound'. An alternative but more infrequent answer identified the 'speakers' which created 'the sensation of sound coming from all directions'. For the next point, several incorrect responses included the details of the furnishings provided by modern cinemas but did not specify the advantage that they provided a 'comfortable' or 'luxurious' experience.

In Paragraph 3, there were three further content points. Many responses successfully identified 'being part of an audience' or being 'collectively immersed' as an advantage, and also that going to the cinema was a 'memorable' or 'special' evening or occasion, with the acceptable additional detail of going with 'family and friends'. However, 'a shared experience' alone was not creditworthy since it provided no distinction between being part of an 'audience' and going with 'friends and family', a point made in the previous paragraph. The final point in the paragraph that cinemas offer 'escapism' or 'relaxation' was also successfully selected. Identifying the disadvantage of 'interruptions' at home could not score since it did not clearly identify the advantage of watching a film in a cinema.

The two final advantages of cinemas were found in Paragraph 4. Many responses successfully selected 'to be part of a long tradition'. Clarity was essential here, so 'a long tradition' alone could not score, nor could answers which included irrelevant details of the cinema's history from 'silent films' to 'computer-generated images'. For the last advantage, there were several ways this point could be made. A correct point had to refer to what happens 'pre-release' or before a film is released, with the added detail of 'hype' or publicity 'heightening' or increasing the 'anticipation'. Alternatively, 'merchandise before a film is released heightens excitement' was a valid point. While there were several ways to make this point, the main problem was that responses often omitted a key detail, such as 'pre-release' or 'merchandise'. Some responses featured text indiscriminately lifted from the passage and included examples of 'merchandise' without 'for example' to distinguish the examples of 'clothing, stationery and gadgets' from the overarching point.

In the second section of the summary, the rubric asked for the advantages of streaming as outlined in the passage, and there were seven content points, excluding the given point, to be found in Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

In Paragraph 5, there were three content points excluding the given point. The first point candidates could make was that streaming is 'cheaper'. A content point which then went on to discuss the benefit of this for low-income families was bringing in too much extraneous information. The next advantage was that streaming can take place on 'any device'. A few responses included the examples of 'smart television' or 'tablet' in brackets which meant that the point was not creditworthy. Instead, these examples of devices should have been identified as such with 'for example' or 'like'. For the next point, 'films' had to be specified and a general reference that streaming can be accessed in many places was incorrect, since the passage at this point is focusing on the advantage of watching a *film* in a range of places. If the examples of 'train' and 'café' were included, most candidates took their cue from the text and wrote 'for example'.

Paragraph 6 considered the advantages of streaming for busy people in general, not specifically 'waiters' or 'nurses' who are examples of people with busy time schedules. The first point which could be made was that streaming 'can be done at any time' and if the point went on to include further content, 'in the middle of the night', this had to be identified as an example. The following advantage of being able to 'serialise a film' was made succinctly in many responses.

In the final paragraph, Paragraph 7, two content points could be found. The first advantage was the opportunity to 'binge-view' or 'binge-watch', and if a candidate included further detail as to what is being 'binge-viewed', a 'series', 'film series' or 'episodes' were acceptable. To 'binge-view a show' or 'film' was incorrect since these do not necessarily continue over several 'episodes' in their original form. The alternative point that people could 'watch a whole series over a few days' was also acceptable. However, in

several cases, responses stated that streaming services 'release each episode' at once but did not clarify the advantage of this. Similarly, for the final point many responses explained that 'cinema films... arrive in streaming services' without identifying the advantage that people can 'catch up' on anything they have missed.

In **Question 1(b)**, responses which scored highly in **Question 1(a)** often scored highly on Relevance. There was a maximum of 16 content points, including the given points, candidates could refer to.

The most impressive Band 4 and Band 5 efforts were from responses which included a wide range of relevant points, made with clarity, and avoided unnecessary examples and additional details. These responses were balanced, giving equal consideration to both parts of the question.

Less secure responses, many relying on copying sections of the text, included irrelevance, such as details about the measurements of screens as well as offering unnecessary conclusions. These responses sometimes repeated points: having identified 'surround sound' as an advantage, some went on to explain the effect of the 'speakers behind the listener'. Band 3 responses included at least half of the available points, while a limited range of points generally merited Band 2 or Band 1 levels for Relevance.

Candidates are advised to use their own words and those who did use them, together with some of their own constructions to link the main ideas, created a fluency which was easy to follow. The best responses demonstrated an impressive coherence using a range of stylish and skilful linking devices, including varied and appropriate adverbial connectives and original complex structures introduced by 'which' and 'who'. Points were often synthesised, such as 'a film can be streamed at any time, on any device and in a range of places'. The repetitive use of 'and' or 'also' to link content was also avoided in these skilful and impressive summaries, and punctuation was accurate.

in less successful summaries, it was common for some adverbial connectives such as 'nevertheless' or 'likewise' to be used incorrectly, and others such as 'in addition', 'moreover' and 'furthermore' to be placed at random or mechanically at the beginning of a new sentence. The quality of coherence was also impacted by awkward attempts to link points using phrases such as 'by the way', 'on the flip side of the coin' or 'adding on' which are not appropriate for a formal summary. The use of 'next' and 'then' is also a limited way to link content points. It is important for candidates to ensure that the continuation from the opening 10 words is grammatically accurate, thus aiding fluency and coherence. Weaknesses in grammar and punctuation impacted on the fluent presentation of points.

In **Question 2**, candidates were required to select and write down three pieces of advice, one from each of Paragraphs 3, 5 and 7. Although 'reading for ideas' has always been integral to this examination, identifying pieces of advice is new this year. It is important that candidates follow the rubric and 'write down' the advice as it is given in the text without omissions or additions. The key here is to identify structures which offer clear guidance and advice as to how individuals should act. Candidates should not automatically presume the modal verb 'can' is an indicator of advice. In these paragraphs, 'can' is used to suggest the possibility or ability to do something.

In Paragraph 3, we are advised to 'avoid the temptation to buy too many unhealthy snacks in the foyer'. It was essential to include 'in the foyer' and 'the temptation' to highlight the prominence of these snacks in a cinema entrance, and 'too many' to suggest overindulgence.

In Paragraph 5, the advice given is to 'wear headphones to avoid disturbing other passengers' or 'do not forget to wear headphones'. Any answers which brought in reference to train journeys or watching a film on a tablet were bringing in too much irrelevant detail and blurring the advice. Some erroneous responses included 'you can use your account on any device' or 'watching a streamed film can be done at any time', but neither is advice, but instead, observations of what is possible.

The final piece of advice in Paragraph 7 was 'to sign up to a streaming service', with the acceptable additional detail 'for this very reason'. This addition could be substituted with 'to binge-view' or 'to watch the series over a few days'.

## **Section 2 Reading for Meaning**

Questions required an understanding of both explicit and inferential meaning, in addition to language and effect.



**Question 3(a)** was a straightforward question asking what was the first sign that the ferry was approaching land and nearly all candidates provided a correct answer: 'the ferry sounded its hooter' or simply 'the hooter'. Because the question specifies the 'first sign', responses which gave the second piece of evidence (when a child announced that land was in sight) could not be credited.

**Question 3(b)** was another literal comprehension question asking why the writer and his wife were 'thrown against each other'. Many responses demonstrated an awareness that the answer was in the preceding sentence but did not show careful selection – 'the ship swayed' – instead lifting the whole sentence, including the irrelevant detail about diesel-scented air.

To answer **Question 3(c)** correctly, candidates had to read the whole sentence carefully to locate the answer at the beginning. Candidates had to deduce that because the writer and his wife were 'trapped' between a lorry and a car in the hold, they could not see that 'the harbour was in sight' so they could 'only assume that it was true'. Many unsuccessful responses described the lorry loaded with vegetables. It was also incorrect to lift 'A child called out that the harbour was in sight' because this put focus on the child rather than on the fact that the harbour could be seen, but 'they assumed what the child said about the harbour being in sight was true' could score. In some cases responses provided a detail about the couple feeling like outsiders which was incorrect.

**Question 3(d)** asked why the writer thought his wife to have 'remarkable thought-reading talent'. The wife put into words the writer's feelings and there were several ways the mark could be gained. The most succinct answer was 'she said what he felt' but other more detailed responses were also creditworthy: 'he was thinking about being a foreigner when his wife said she felt like an outsider'. There were many partial answers such as 'they both had the same thoughts' or 'they both felt like outsiders', but these were incomplete without the idea of her verbalising his thoughts.

**Question 4** asked candidates what was the 'disaster' the writer was referring to. The disaster was 'not being accepted', 'not fitting in', 'being rejected' or 'having to leave at the end of the year'. Many responses stated that the disaster was leaving home and coming to live on an island, but there is nothing *disastrous* in this so was too general to be creditworthy.

**Question 5(a)** was an inferential question asking what had happened when 'sunlight streamed into the hold'. The connection had to be made between their arrival and disembarkation, and being inside an enclosed hold of the ferry, and a small number of responses showed an understanding of this and correctly stated that a door or exit must have opened. The hold or ferry opened was too vague to be credited, as were the general observations that 'they had arrived', 'it was time to disembark' or 'the sun rose'.

In **Question 5(b)**, candidates had to give the single word used in Paragraph 3 which conveyed a similar idea to 'moved cautiously', and the correct response was 'edged'. A few responses included the whole phrase 'we edged our way down' but this was not creditworthy since the question asked for one word. If a candidate does choose to copy the phrase, they must highlight the answer by underlining, for example. Occasionally, 'gangplank' and 'throng' were selected but these nouns are clearly incorrect.

**Question 5(c)** was the first own word question and candidates were asked to explain how the behaviour of the passengers was blocking the entrance. The key lay in capturing the meaning of 'unaware' and 'embracing'. Examples of correct answers were 'not realising', 'did not know' or 'oblivious' for 'unaware', and 'hugging' or 'cuddling' for 'embracing'. Some incorrect responses repeated the words that candidates were required to explain or reflected an apparent misreading of the question as 'Why were the passengers blocking the exit?', explaining that they were being met by their relatives and stood in the way of the exit.

**Question 6(a)** was well answered with the majority of responses stating that the bus had been driven or crashed into a bin, but any suggestion that Nano, the bus driver, intentionally drove the bus into the bin was incorrect as there is no evidence of this. Furthermore, 'bumping' into the bin was too weak to score and 'knocking over the bin' was not possible because it was embedded in concrete.

**Question 6(b)** was a literal comprehension question asking in what two ways was the bus driver being attacked. This required close reading to score two marks. The first mark was awarded for the physical attack when a grandmother hit, or tried to hit, the driver with her walking stick. To simply write 'physically attacked' was an insufficient demonstration of close reading skills and understanding, as was a response which referred to plural 'grandmothers' or 'walking sticks'. Some answers offered the textual detail that 'grandmothers were shaking their walking sticks' which was not creditworthy because there is no idea of 'attack' here. The second mark was achieved with 'the grandmothers insulted him'. Again, attention to detail meant 'the grandmother insulted him' was incorrect. Acceptable alternatives for 'insulted' included 'scolded',

'abused' and 'mocked'. In both answers, 'old women' or 'old ladies' were acceptable substitutes for 'grandmothers', but 'people', 'she' or 'they' lacked precision.

**Question 6(c)** was an inferential question for which there were several possible correct answers for how the given phrase showed the bus driver's 'desperation'. A few responses perceptively identified the idea that 'it was impossible to move the bin', and a mark could also be gained by simply stating 'the bin is embedded in concrete' meaning 'no one could have moved it'. Incorrect answers focused on the literal details, particularly that he was lying or blaming someone else, or misinterpreted 'he cried' as 'he was crying'.

For **Question 7**, the passage tells us that the young man has metal cutters, and many responses demonstrated an interpretation of the 'strenuous work' that he was doing as 'cutting metal' or 'cutting the metal bin'. The opening sentence of the paragraph describes the bumper caught on the litter bin and more discerning responses demonstrated consideration of this scenario stating that the young man was more likely 'cutting away' or 'cutting out' the metal bin or bumper, or 'separating the bin from the bus'. Responses which stated that he was picking up the litter missed the textual detail of his 'metal cutter'.

**Question 8** was the second question which required candidates to answer in their own words. The meaning of the key words 'eternally' and 'folklore' had to be captured, and, as with **Question 5(c)**, this had to be done within a sensible context. Synonyms for 'eternally' included 'forever', 'always', 'for a long time' or 'for generations'. A few responses described the events as 'etched' or 'carved' in the memory which was an impressive way to show understanding of 'permanence'. However, 'for the rest of his life' or 'for a while' were too limited and did not capture the idea of for eternity. Responses included a range of correct meanings for 'folklore': 'story', 'gossip', 'legend' and 'history'; 'villagers would talk about' was also creditworthy with its suggestion of the story being narrated among the community. A few incorrect responses shifted the focus from the given phrase in answers such as 'Nano would be humiliated' or 'the bus driver would lose his job'.

**Question 9** tested the understanding, in context, of words in the passage. The multiple-choice format allowed for candidates to take each of the four possible alternatives for the given word back to the passage and decide which was the most appropriate synonym for the original. The most successful response was **9(b)** where 'crowd' was invariably chosen as a meaning for 'mass', with the very occasional candidate offering 'weight', suggesting they were not considering the word in context. **9(c)** was fairly well answered with 'said firmly' commonly selected for 'insisted', the clue being that Nano is repeating his declaration of innocence. A common incorrect answer for **9(c)**, 'said politely', showed misunderstanding of Nano's character. Many candidates correctly selected 'attention' for 'focus' for **9(d)**, recognising that the alternatives such as 'panic' would have made no sense in context. There was much success with **9(e)** by candidates who realised that the grandmothers were no longer attacking him and correctly selected 'stopped' for 'left off'. There was less consensus with **9(a)**, the correct meaning for 'squashed' being 'crushed'. The clue here is that the writer and his wife are in an enclosed space with a loaded lorry, a car and many other people. Candidates who selected 'pushed', a common incorrect answer, were possibly distracted by the writer and his wife being 'thrown against other passengers'.

**Question 10** was the question dedicated to the appreciation of the writer's craft. In both **Question 10(a)** and **Question 10(b)**, candidates were asked to give, first, the meaning of a phrase as used in the passage, and then to give the effect of that phrase. As mentioned before in 'Key Messages', it is important that candidates distinguish between the two parts of the question to ensure success. Many responses offered an effect as a meaning and vice-versa.

**Question 10(a)** directed candidates to the phrase 'searched for something upbeat' which described the writer, and the first task was to give the meaning of this phrase. Candidates had two words to focus on: 'searched' and 'upbeat'. To gain the mark an answer had to show understanding of the meaning of both words. For 'searched', the meaning could be 'tried to find', 'tried to come up with' or 'looked for'. For 'upbeat', acceptable meanings included 'positive', 'cheerful' or 'comforting'. Correct answers which earned a mark included 'looked for something reassuring', 'tried to find cheerful words' or 'hunted for something amusing'. However, 'tried to say' for 'searched for' was not acceptable since this is copied text while 'he wanted to say' lacks the idea of 'searching'. Some answers were partial and repeated the words in the phrase, such as 'searched for something encouraging' or 'looked for something upbeat'. Other incorrect answers focused on the events in the narrative: his wife is anxious and he wanted to comfort her; they have arrived in a foreign country; he told her they were explorers. Some responses went beyond the meaning and stated 'he looked for something to cheer up his wife' or 'he tried to find words which would make her feel better'. These are both incorrect because they have moved away from the literal meaning of the given phrase to the effect of the words.

The key to success in identifying the effect was to ask 'what does the phrase tell us about the writer?' and successful answers included 'the writer is trying to comfort his wife'; 'he is attempting to make her look on the bright side'; 'he is considerate'; and 'it shows the writer's thoughtfulness'. All these creditworthy responses have moved away from the literal 'what does the phrase mean' towards an understanding of the writer's character, and they also make it clear who is the subject: 'the writer'. Responses such as 'to comfort her', 'make her feel positive' or simply 'caring' lacked focus on 'the writer' in the question. In some cases, the effect was misinterpreted as 'what happens next?', prompting incorrect answers such as 'my words were drowned by the crashing of chains'.

**Question 10(b)** asked for the meaning and the effect of the phrase 'a squadron of grandmothers'. The meaning was very well answered with the majority of candidates recognising that 'squadron', in this context, meant 'a group', 'a crowd', 'several' or 'many'.

There was reasonable success with the effect of the 'squadron' comparison by candidates who asked themselves 'what do a squadron and the grandmothers have in common?' Correct answers included 'they were ready to attack'; 'they were intimidating' or 'threatening'; or they were a 'team', 'united', or 'on a mission'. Incorrect responses did not respond to the analogy and gave answers such as 'the grandmothers were angry'. This may be true but it is not an effect derived from the 'squadron' metaphor. As with

**Question 10(a)**, in some cases, the effect was misinterpreted as 'what is happening?' prompting repetition of the fact that Nano had driven into a bin or the grandmothers were surrounding him.