

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0991/11
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, answers should be as brief as possible. Too much information lifted from the text may mistakenly include incorrect details which could negate the answer. Candidates should **not** paraphrase the wording in the text.
- In **Exercise 2**, the letters which convey the answer should be clear and on the appropriate line. If candidates have a change of mind, they should cross out and rewrite the new response and not overwrite the original answer.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates' answers should be brief and in the form of a note. It is important to read carefully the wording of the question heading and to supply a verb where necessary.
- In **Exercise 4**, the details in each option **A**, **B**, **C** will be mentioned in the text. However, only one option will contain the details which fully and precisely correspond to the wording of the question. Candidates need to make it clear, with a tick in the box, which option they have chosen.
- In **Exercises 5** and **6**, candidates should focus on writing pieces which contain relevant detail and development. In **Exercise 5**, to gain access to the higher mark levels for Content, candidates must address all three bullet points in the rubric. In **Exercise 6**, candidates may use the prompts, and will be given credit for adding original and independent detail to them. For both **Exercises 5** and **6**, higher level marks for Language will be awarded to those candidates who write accurately and with a wide range of less common vocabulary and more complex structures.

General comments

Candidates should be advised that throughout the paper, the spaces and number of lines are arranged to guide them as to the length of answer required and they should not consistently exceed this. This is particularly relevant to **Exercise 3** where answers should be short notes.

For **Exercises 5** and **6**, candidates should use the blank page at the end of the booklet as a continuation of their answers, but they need to indicate clearly on their question paper where extra work has been added.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

There was a range of success seen on all tasks.

Question 1

This was well attempted, though some candidates incorrectly selected '*parcours*', '*route or journey*'. Most recognised that the question required another term for 'parkour' rather than a translation.

Question 2

This was very well answered. A small number of candidates incorrectly wrote '*David Belle*' when the question demanded the name of a group of friends.

Question 3

This question was very well attempted and very few candidates were tempted to answer '*dancer*' which was the distractor.

Question 4

This task did not seem to be fully understood by all candidates. The key word '*first*' in the question linked it to the expression '*Before either of these...*' in the text. Many answered '*swinging from bars*' or '*lots of forward and backward rolls*' which were indeed movements that Sebastian tried, but they were not the first.

Question 5

This question was very well answered with only a small number of candidates selecting the distractor '*large blocks of stone*'.

Question 6

Many candidates were successful in recognising all the correct details and were awarded the full three marks. Fewer candidates selected the first point '*fun*', and the most common omission was the comparative '*more*' in points two and three. When a comparative or superlative idea is written in the text, it is likely to be an important detail and should always be included in the answer. In the fourth point this was conveyed by the idea of '*improve*' and most candidates recognised this. The most common incorrect answer was '*becoming stronger*', where candidates may have misread the phrase '*although I can't claim that it made me stronger*' in the text. Candidates could not be credited twice where they repeated the same idea with the answers '*balance improved*' and '*more stable*'.

Centres are reminded that for this final question in **Exercise 1**, candidates should be prepared to review the article as a whole because key information may appear at any point in the text.

Exercise 2

Question 7

Candidates were most successful with **Questions (b), (d) and (e)**. Many were also credited with correct answers for **(a), (g) and (i)**. **Questions (c), (f) and (h)** were not as well understood by all candidates.

In **Question (c)**, candidates needed to match the statement '*which section includes...several reasons why young seals tend to wander*' with the detail in text A, '*they are young, they lack experience, and it's in their nature to explore*'. The most common incorrect answer was **B**, where candidates possibly linked the statement with the detail '*one young seal broke into a house and spent several hours on the sofa*'. This information certainly gives an example of a young seal wandering but does not give reasons 'why'. Some candidates also answered **C** which stated that '*seals can actually travel long distances*' and '*the middle of a road is somewhere that frequently attracts seals*'. Again, these were examples of their behaviour rather than reasons for it.

In **Question (f)**, '*how people tend to feel when they see a young seal away from the beach*', the correct match was with text A where, following the detail that seals had been found on busy roads away from the beach, the final sentence stated, '*people are often concerned if they come across a young seal there*'. The key word here was '*concerned*' and was an expression of people's feelings. Many candidates incorrectly selected statement **B**, possibly because of the wording, '*Tourists... were entertained by the seal playing in the lake*'. Many candidates may have connected '*tend to feel...*' and '*away from the beach*' in the statement with '*entertained*' and '*in the lake*' in the text but this link was not precise enough. This question contained implied meaning on the part of the writer and candidates should be made aware that this is tested in this exercise along with more factual detail.

In **Question (h)**, candidates needed to match the statement '*which section includes...why researchers are pleased to see large numbers of seals in the area*' with the statements over three sentences in text D: '*Advisors to the government report...the sight of so many seals each year is welcome...and the population is steadily increasing*'. There were several candidates who were attracted to the sentence in text A, '*the government actually releases an official public notice...warning people that they might encounter higher*

numbers of young seals in human-dominated spaces. Both statements include the two ideas of research by official sources and seal numbers, but the key word *'pleased'* in the statement corresponds to *'welcome'* in text D rather than *'warning'* in text A.

Exercise 3

This exercise was generally well attempted, and most candidates supplied brief answers in note form. The bullet points and the length of the lines are always a guide to candidates as to how to present their answers in this exercise. In both of these note-taking questions, candidates had taken care when transcribing their answers from the text and spellings were accurate. It is possible that misreading the heading in **Question 9** meant that a good number of candidates scored zero marks for this question.

Question 8

Points 1 and 5 were particularly well attempted and in Point 4 the need for a suitable verb was well recognised. For Point 2, some candidates could not be credited for the imprecise answer *'no support'*. This required the idea of 'acceptance' to follow precisely the meaning in the text. In Point 3, a good number of candidates lifted incomplete information from the text such as, *'if anything goes wrong you are responsible'* without conveying any idea of repairs. And the full answer was not given by most candidates where they omitted the idea that repairs had to be carried out by the rowers themselves, so the response *'no repairs'* on its own was insufficient.

Question 9

This question did not seem to be fully understood by a majority of candidates. The word *'highlights'* in the heading was key to getting a correct response. The correct answers were flagged in the text with expressions such as *'memorable aspects'*, *'a huge boost'* and *'truly unforgettable'*. Many candidates mistakenly wrote responses which detailed statistical or factual information rather than highlights. Occasionally, for Point 3, candidates wrote *'spotting land'* without the idea of *'in the distance'* and could not be credited.

Exercise 4

Questions 10–15

This is a multiple-choice exercise, containing six questions, each with three possible options **A**, **B** or **C** as answers. The questions follow the order written in the text and candidates should indicate their answer by ticking their chosen box. Candidates should look for information and ideas which are connected in the text using, for example, pronouns as well as vocabulary and phrases which indicate time, cause and effect. Additionally, information may be implied, and candidates should be aware of words and expressions that suggest the writer's attitude and feelings.

Candidates were most successful with **Questions 11, 12 and 14** and least successful with **Questions 10, 11 and 13**.

Question 10

The correct answer to this question was **A** and was found in the second paragraph. The statement in **B** was incorrect because, although the text does refer to a relative, her uncle, it also states that he was not in fact researching the plants at the moment, but that *'he would look into it'* (i.e. suggesting in the future). Option **C** stated that *'it was the first subject that she found online'* but the wording of the text *'I spent some time browsing websites one weekend, looking for something suitable'* did not support this. The statement in option **A** *'she had visited this place before'* was matched most closely with the wording *'I have fond memories of a long summer holiday there...'* in the text.

Question 11

The correct answer to this question was **B** and the key details were found towards the end of paragraph three. In **A**, candidates appeared to have been tempted by the idea of *'nasty injuries'* being linked to *'might get hurt by them'* and *'they stick to your skin'*. Likewise, in option **C**, the text states that the prickly pears *'are also spreading in areas where many people like to ski each winter'* which could have referred to the *'winter sports'* in the statement. The correct answer was found in the wording in the penultimate sentence, which

begins with *'However what is particularly concerning ...'* which matches most closely with the wording *'the main problem'* in the statement and was reinforced by the expression *'and they covered the soil completely'*.

Question 13

This question appeared to be the least understood in the whole exercise, with many candidates choosing distractors such as *'plants... don't like to be covered in snow'* and *'down in the valleys'* which may have tempted candidates to choose option **B** *'causing plants to die'* and **C** *'happening at a lower level'* respectively. The main message in paragraph five linked to the correct answer **A**: as a result of the warmer climate, the snow cover was *'getting smaller'*.

Exercise 5

General comments

There are three bullet prompts in **Exercise 5** which must be developed to achieve higher marks for Content in the writing criteria. The more successful candidates wrote a paragraph for each bullet point, which gave the whole piece appropriate detail and balance. In addition, they should convey a very good sense of Purpose and Audience by addressing the recipient of the email and engaging their interest. Candidates who demonstrated a more vibrant, informal style and provide some innovative detail gained higher marks for this question.

Many candidates made a good attempt to supply a suitably brief introduction and concluding statement, in an informal register. There were also fewer prolonged greetings and conclusions, with pre-learnt expressions, than in past sessions. In addition, there was far less evidence of inappropriate and outdated idioms.

Candidates should use a wide range of less common vocabulary and more complex structures to achieve higher marks for Language. It is important that the writing should be grammatically accurate, particularly in the use of verb tenses, and well organised with paragraphs and full stops used appropriately.

Question 16

Most candidates wrote well-developed emails with an appropriately informal tone. The most successful responses contained a description of their preparations for the trip, together with details of what they particularly liked about it and a full explanation of a problem that they faced.

For the first bullet point, the most successful candidates expanded on the details of the preparation such as research into particular artists or specific periods in history. They also managed to convey a sense of excitement that they felt about the upcoming trip. Many candidates concentrated on more practical concerns such as what equipment to take, particularly cameras as well as suitable clothing and food and drink for the journey. For example, *'I was excited so I grabbed a notebook so that I could jot down my observations at the museum. I asked my teacher to lend me her camera so I could photograph anything I found really interesting'*. Less successful candidates listed items that they were taking on the trip with little variety or feeling: *'We all got our bags ready and I got chips, cakes and so on and some students brought drinks'*.

For the second bullet point, candidates were credited when they were able to describe with feeling what they liked about the museum trip. The most successful managed to convey a sense of pleasure and delight at what they saw, which reinforced their enjoyment of the whole experience: *'The guide explained very clearly each picture, telling us when it was painted and what it represented. In addition, there was a room where you could see all of Van Gogh's paintings moving on the walls – it was magical!'*

Less successful candidates tended to provide the slightest detail about predictable aspects of the museum, such as *'it was big and had many objects'* with mild personal opinions, for example, *'what I liked was that it was different from others'*.

For the final bullet point, candidates received high marks if they could tell their friend about a problem on the trip, expanded on the basic details of the problem and expressed their feelings about it. Problems included those inside the museum, and in getting there. For some candidates, the problem that they encountered spoilt the day, whilst for others it was an inconvenience but not enough to ruin the whole experience and, occasionally, there were unexpected outcomes: *'All of a sudden, an alarm started to go off and the doors got locked. We all panicked and we later found out that an important fossil had been stolen. As an apology for the disturbance, the museum gave us free tickets to go back'*.

The most effective responses often referred back to the recipient of the email and achieved a very good sense of purpose and audience throughout, not only in the friendly opening and closing sentences. In their concluding paragraph, many candidates invited their friend to go along with them next time, insisting that it would be fun to be together. Less successful candidates generally introduced the email appropriately but often wrote in the style of a narrative with an abrupt ending.

Overall, more successful candidates were careful to ensure that all three bullet points in the task were addressed and developed. The emails of less successful candidates often demonstrated an imbalance in the development of bullet points one and three which tended to be addressed with just one line *'I prepared food for the trip'* and *'The trip was too short'*.

From a Language point of view, most candidates wrote in a suitably informal register. More successful candidates used a wide range of less common vocabulary, including a variety of well-chosen adjectives and adverbs. For example, *'angelic sounds'*, *'magical atmosphere'*, *'absolutely breath-taking'* and *'stunningly decorated'*. In addition, more successful candidates used a variety of appropriate idioms such as *'I couldn't believe my eyes'* and *'it blew my mind'*. There were also many examples of linguistic control in more complex structures, for example, *'We went all afternoon without being able to eat anything so we were starving by the end of the visit'*, and *'we faced some issues with the staff as our designated tour guide was called away to deal with a problem elsewhere in the museum'* and *'if the bus hadn't arrived late to pick up we could have spent longer inside the museum'*.

Grammar errors were largely because of the misuse of verbs and there was a number of candidates who mistakenly used the combination of *'have went'* or *'had went'*. There was also mixing of past and present tenses and non-agreement of subject and verb, for example *'before the trip we prepare a lot of things'* and *'we packed all the food and we eat it on the bus'*.

Spelling was generally good, even when more ambitious language and structures were used, although many candidates produced *'though'* for *'thought'*, *'where'* for *'were'* and *'think'* for *'thing'*. There were also many who were unclear about the difference between *'their'*, *'there'* and *'they're'*.

Most candidates used paragraphs to good effect to divide their ideas, and basic punctuation was generally sound. Some candidates mistakenly substituted commas for full stops throughout the whole piece, thus producing long sentences with no capital letters. There were some with no paragraphing at all which showed a lack of organisation and structure. By contrast, some candidates wrote very short sentences throughout with no clauses or connectives and candidates are encouraged to attempt simple connecting words to produce less repetitive content. Sentences and phrases which display a variety of structure and length as well as accuracy would receive higher marks.

Exercise 6

General comments

There are four prompts to help candidates with basic ideas. Candidates are more likely to gain higher marks if they develop these comments and add their own, and, in the case of writing an article, write with a suitable formal register. Candidates should use more complex vocabulary and structures as well as persuasive language which seeks to convince the reader of their views.

A clear, organised sequence of views and arguments is very important. In this session, the most successful candidates made notes on the blank pages at the end of the question paper before starting their article. The planning was often quite simple but it was enough to make a noticeable difference to the quality of the writing.

Question 17

Most candidates were able to adopt a formal tone, register and format for this final exercise. The more successful candidates used only one or two prompts and developed ideas and opinions of their own. Many presented a balanced article focusing on both the positive and negative aspects of a shorter working week. There were also convincing articles which argued totally for or against the topic.

From a Content point of view, many candidates agreed that the four-day working week would allow people more time to spend with their families and friends and give them more chance to take up a new hobby or interest. There would be the added benefit that they would be less stressed and would go back to work with

more energy and motivation, for example, *‘Employees can return to their jobs feeling well-rested and eager to perform their best, rather than feeling burnt-out and simply exhausted’*.

Opinion was divided as to whether everyone would get more work done. Many candidates took the view that employees would work harder to achieve the same amount in one day less and this would be *‘more beneficial for the company because of the workers more focused minds and eagerness to work’*. Other candidates believed that doing the same amount of work in less time would mean greater stress on the part of the employees and they would be less caring about the quality of their work: *‘People won’t do their work properly and would just wait for their break. They will get lazy and have no appetite to work’*.

There was more agreement on the two prompts that questioned whether, with a shorter working week, employees would earn less and companies would need to hire more staff. Most candidates believed this could create financial stress, *‘working one day less removes a significant amount from their salary’*, and companies would need to hire more staff which would be more expensive for the employer.

Overall, there was support for both the benefits and disadvantages of the four-day working week. In their conclusion, more successful candidates introduced a different, alternative view that it would be better to leave it to each individual company to find a solution that worked for both employers and employees.

Less successful candidates closely followed the prompts, offering little additional comment, and, on occasion, seemed unsure as to the difference between ‘employers’ and ‘employees’ resulting in a lack of clarity in their writing. They also started the article with long introductions which re-stated the rubric wording and ended with unsatisfactory conclusions which lacked impact because they merely repeated the prompts for and against without offering any views of their own.

From a Language point of view, the most successful candidates used ambitious and complex structures to express their ideas and opinions, for example, *‘Granting workers more days off at the end of the week would likely decrease the percentage of absentees each month’* and *‘Working 80-85 hours a week is not ideal, mainly because it robs them of the ability to spend time with their loved ones’*.

There were also many examples of less common adjectives such as *‘non-existent breaks’*, *‘bleak aspects’*, *‘welcome change’* and *‘demanding jobs’*. There was also a good attempt at using topic-related vocabulary, for example *‘work ethic’*, *‘work-life balance’*, *‘availability of labour’*, and *‘domino effect’*. Candidates do not always have to produce complex structures, very often a well-chosen and more unusual single word is equally effective. Many candidates used simple rhetorical questions at the start of their article to good effect *‘We would all want to work less, wouldn’t we?’*. A good number of candidates achieved a strong and enthusiastic register for an article with expressions such as *‘both sides of the argument are very strong...’*, *‘the realistic answer is no’* and *‘this controversial topic has triggered much debate’*.

Paragraphs and linking words were generally well used and provided a balance when conveying different points. On occasion, less successful candidates made no attempt to break the content into more reader-friendly sections and produced a full-length piece with just one paragraph only. Cohesive words and expressions such as *‘before diving into the answer’*, *‘many think otherwise’*, *‘the alternative view is’* and *‘the overall impression’* in addition to *‘on the one hand’* and *‘on the other hand’* significantly helped the flow when there was additional content or a change of direction in the article.

Overall, most candidates responded with a structured piece of writing which covered both the benefits and the disadvantages of a four-day working week. To gain access to higher marks for Content, the article format requires the writer to express their own views as well as using the ideas in the prompts. Many candidates established a good balance to their writing by providing an introductory comment on the topic of the rubric and a concluding statement, both of which helped to give a sense of cohesion to many of the articles. More successful candidates provided a different form of words in the concluding paragraph to that used in the main body of the article and avoided repetition of the same vocabulary, expressions and opinions.

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Key messages

- In **Exercises 1 – 4**, candidates should focus on the question word (how, what, where, when) as well as on reference and linking words seen in the texts (e.g. those, this, the former, however, but, on the other hand, while, whereas etc.). In **Exercises 1** and **3**, language concerning key details should be taken from the text. Candidates are advised not to use paraphrasing or synonyms.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should focus on providing key details and a precise response. Excess details could make the response incorrect.
- In **Exercise 2**, candidates are required to identify key details including attitudes and opinions, and to demonstrate understanding of what is implied, but not explicitly stated. Overall, this exercise was very well attempted although there was evidence that some candidates require better preparation for questions which assess inference.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates should ensure that responses are brief and that they correspond to the headings of each section. Candidates should be guided by the inclusion of bullet points which indicate the number of responses required. Each response should be presented on a separate line as shown by the bullet points.
- In **Exercise 4**, candidates should be aware that the details in each option, A, B, C, of a question will be mentioned in the text. However, only one option will contain the details that fully and accurately correspond to the central focus of the question.
- In **Exercises 5** and **6**, candidates should fully develop their response, fulfilling all requirements of the task, aiming for the maximum rather than the minimum number of words stated on the question paper. For **Exercise 5**, all three bullet points must be clearly addressed, possibly providing several related ideas to demonstrate development. A salutation and closing formula should be included but candidates are **not** required to recreate the layout of an email using 'From', 'To', 'Subject' or 'Date' information. For **Exercise 6**, if candidates use the ideas in the prompts, these must be expressed in their own words and developed with their own ideas.

General comments

There was a range of success seen on all tasks.

Exercise 1

This exercise was well attempted by the majority of candidates.

Question 1

This question required a numerical response indicated by the question words 'how many'. It was generally well answered. The most common incorrect response was '5000', which refers to the number of species in the largest 2 groups rather than the overall total mentioned previously in the text.

Question 2

This question was quite well answered. A significant number of candidates, however, appeared to have focused on the decline of the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing butterfly, when the correct response was

contained in 'but currently appears as endangered in the Red list...' Some responses incorrectly referred to the size of the butterfly.

Question 3

This question was well answered. However, some responses referred to the location of 'Hawaii and Saudi Arabia'.

Question 4

This question was generally well answered. The majority of candidates appeared to have understood the question words 'what record' and the use of 'of all', indicating the need for a superlative form in the response. This question required close reading of the paragraph as a whole.

Question 5

This question was well answered and most candidates responded correctly with 'mud'. Some responses indicated that the reference words 'the former ...the latter' had not been fully understood. Any reference to nectar, pollen or other foods could not be credited.

Question 6

Many candidates gained the full three marks for this question, though some responses were incomplete and could not be credited. For example, when referring only to 'wing patterns' – all butterflies have wing patterns and so in order to be credited, the response required the idea of 'wing patterns that confuse'. Others omitted the idea of 'toxic' when referring to chemicals stored in the body of the butterfly. A few responses indicated that candidates may not have understood the question, giving the response 'consume mud'.

Exercise 2

Candidates are required to focus on understanding paraphrased expressions not just rely on exact word matches between the text and the questions. Close reading of both the questions and across texts is essential.

This multiple matching exercise was well answered by a significant number of candidates, with many achieving at least five out of the nine marks available. A notable number of candidates managed to provide all nine correct answers. **Questions a, b, f** and **i** were the most challenging.

- (a) For this question, candidates were required to select which of the four songwriters gets their greatest inspiration from nature. The correct answer was B: 'the idea for the song most probably formed while I was watching a wildlife documentary or seeing an astonishing landscape' as this clearly states that nature inspired the writer. The most common incorrect answer was C. It is possible that candidates who selected this response had read 'I wish I could report that truly important things like the environment and nature are what give me the majority of my ideas' but had not read on to 'but it's more often something trivial, like a story I've read about in the local newspaper'. A was another common incorrect response, possibly because of the reference to a walk in the fields.
- (b) The focus of this item was the songwriter having phases when ideas for songs disappear. The correct answer was D, where Hassan mentions that 'it might be several months before the next inspiration comes'. B was the most common incorrect response. The sentence, '...but at least I know what to do if I suddenly can't think of anything to write about' may have misled some candidates.
- (f) Candidates needed to identify someone who makes several different versions of the same song. The correct answer was C, supported in the text by 'What I find amusing is to re-record a piece I've written in each of the styles I love,' which clearly indicated that the songwriter personally created multiple versions of the same song. D was selected by many. It is possible that 'Many musicians record their own songs in several different ways...' may have distracted some candidates, but the text goes on to say '...I can not say that's ever been my thing', which makes it clear this songwriter does not record different versions of a song.

- (i) Here candidates were required to identify which songwriter creates their work entirely on a computer. Most candidates correctly selected C, supported by the salient detail: 'The software I use for composing songs is absolutely wonderful,' D was most frequently supplied in error suggesting, perhaps, candidates may have focused on the mention of a computer programme without fully considering the rest of the text.

Exercise 3

Candidates performed very well in this note-taking exercise, with some gaining the full seven marks available. Notes could not be credited if key information was omitted or if incorrect information was added. Some responses were written under the wrong heading, as it appeared that some candidates were not able to distinguish advantages from disadvantages.

Question 8

Most candidates correctly identified two or three advantages of recumbent bikes from the text. The most common error was omitting key qualifiers which were required to gain the mark. For instance, many candidates simply wrote 'They are rapid' or 'very rapid' without the necessary detail 'on flat roads', which was essential. Similarly, the answer 'less stress' was frequently offered, but could not be credited unless the idea in the note was expanded to 'less stress on the body' or 'on the rider.'

The phrase 'less stress on the body' was often written under disadvantages instead of advantages. Similarly, 'less effort' was sometimes placed under the wrong heading. One commonly misattributed point was 'large seat,' which was interpreted by some as an advantage due perhaps to assumed comfort. However, as the text refers to the seat's size as being associated with the bike's heavy weight (a disadvantage), this response could not be credited. Although less frequent, some candidates provided answers that were either irrelevant or imprecise. For example, responses like 'safe in urban environments' or 'legs go straight down' were not expressed as advantages in the text.

Question 9

This section was generally well attempted. Most candidates successfully identified at least two correct notes from the text. A number of candidates selected advantages instead of disadvantages (stopped very quickly, very rapid, little effort). There was also repetition of the same idea ('tricky to cycle up hills' and 'impossible to stand on pedals') so only one of these notes could be credited. A few candidates changed the meaning of a note, writing, for example, 'can't cycle up hills' when the text only suggests this is 'tricky' to do.

Exercise 4

In this multiple-choice exercise, candidates are required to look for information and ideas which are connected in the text through the use of, for example, reference pronouns; words and phrases which indicate time, cause and effect, contrasting ideas and examples. Additionally, information may be implied, and identifying words and phrases that suggest the writer's attitude and feelings can be helpful.

Candidates should focus on understanding questions thoroughly and avoiding reliance on isolated phrases when interpreting the text since options may either be supported or negated by information in the text. Many candidates gained at least 4 of the 6 marks available. In general, candidates found **Questions 10, 12 and 13** the most challenging.

Question 10

In this question, candidates had to determine what Ahmed suggests about his childhood. The correct answer was A, 'He is grateful for being raised in a creative household.' This idea of creativity is implied in the text through 'encouraged to discover our own individual ways of expressing ourselves'. However, many candidates selected B, which they may have incorrectly linked with 'If they'd pushed us in a particular direction'. Candidates may have mistaken this as evidence that Ahmed rejected advice, when in fact, his parents did not give him any careers guidance. The question required inference rather than literal comprehension.

Question 12

Candidates were required to identify Ahmed's view on the most demanding aspect of taking photos in Antarctica. The majority correctly selected A, 'coping with sudden changes in weather.' This choice was clearly supported by the text, which refers to abrupt weather changes that he will never get used to. The most common incorrect answer was C, 'finding the intended subjects.' Although looking for whales is mentioned, Ahmed does not describe this search for subjects as the most demanding aspect.

Question 13

Candidates were asked why Ahmed and his family moved to a tropical island. The correct answer, B, is supported by the text in 'coming up with original proposals...was actually quite hard, though, because we were so cut off from the natural world' (when they lived in New York).

Exercise 5

In this exercise, candidates complete an email task based on fulfilling the requirements specified in three bullet points. Candidates are required to relate the email to the context found in the rubric, in this case telling a friend about their weekend away. The extent to which the bullet points are addressed and developed within the context will determine the mark awarded for Content. If any bullet points are not addressed, then marks are affected.

Question 16

Most responses were fully relevant and used an appropriate informal style and register. The most successful responses also featured some engagement with the target audience by using phrases such as, 'How are you?', 'I hope that your GCSE went well', 'I'm writing to you to tell you about an interesting weekend away with my family' and towards the end of the response: 'Good luck with school' and 'do say hi to your family from me.' There were occasional lapses in the use of register with the use of expressions considered too formal for an email to a friend, such as 'in conclusion' and 'moreover' as well as phrases such as 'I would like to inform you'.

Some responses were less than 120 words, which affected the marks which could be awarded for Content.

The most frequently mentioned problem during the weekend away was that the family car broke down or that there were issues before, during or after the flight. Other problems given were those at the hotel (with the luggage or the room) and problems which occurred in the candidate's home while the family was away. Some responses commented on the effects of the problem on the family by mentioning feelings and emotions (of being disappointed, sad or exhausted). Some just added that the weekend away would have been better if the problem had not occurred and on what they learned from solving the problem. This final bullet point was often the least well-developed of the three.

A range of generally accurate language was seen in many responses. Very few candidates used only simple structures, and a range of sentence complexity was evident in many. Successful responses featured a wide range of simple and complex structures with a high level of accuracy, for example 'Not only did we forget our passports, but the hotel had also lost our booking.' A range of appropriately used less common vocabulary was also seen. Examples included 'mouth-watering food', 'packed with tourists' or 'visibly exhausted.' Successful responses also included accurate and appropriate use of common and less common phrasal verbs.

Less successful responses lacked punctuation accuracy which sometimes had an impact on the clarity of the content being communicated. Grammatical slips seen were largely as a result of the misuse of verb forms, such as, 'he was go', 'he have broke his leg' and the misuse of prepositions: 'we went at my grandma's house,' and 'we stay on the hotel', for example.

Exercise 6

Question 17

In general, the majority of responses used language that communicated the message clearly, writing a well-developed appropriate review, which fulfilled the task. The museum was introduced, positive and negative points discussed followed by a recommendation concerning who would enjoy it. Successful responses gave

the reader a clear view of what to expect regarding design, exhibits, facilities and displays, so that an informed decision could be made about whether to visit or not.

Candidates are required to use the prompts provided as a foundation for their response while also incorporating their own observations and ideas. The majority of candidates wrote about a transport museum in their own cities, or somewhere nearby. Most candidates approached the task with at least a generally good sense of purpose and audience. Nearly all responses provided relevant information, and many candidates structured their reviews effectively, maintaining coherence and logical progression throughout their reviews.

The four prompts were widely used, with many responses addressing them all. Successful responses adapted and developed the prompts effectively by, for example critiquing the guide's language skills, commenting positively on the museum's size, explaining what was learned and why it interested them, or how they felt when the displays were not working. Some responses included what appeared to be real experiences and gave specific details about the museum, thus making the review more informative for the reader and demonstrating a greater sense of purpose and audience. Less successful responses relied heavily on the original wording of the prompts which resulted in repetitive content, and which sometimes affected the sense of purpose and audience.

Generally, the majority of responses were communicated successfully and the full range of marks for Language was awarded. A number of candidates clearly attempted to employ a wide range of complex structures and less common vocabulary. Some responses demonstrated a high level of language accuracy with only occasional errors, enabling them to achieve the precision required for marks in the top level. Their responses included accurate, varied sentence structures, appropriate punctuation and paragraphing, along with less common vocabulary. For example, 'My personal highlight was the evolution of the airplane as I had an opportunity to look at some replicas of airplanes; however, some drawbacks of the museum cannot be ignored' and 'Located in the heart of Liverpool, the newly opened 'Transport Museum' is surely a new addition to your bucket list.'

There was evidence of attempts at more complex language which included non-impeding errors such as, 'We are wanting to see transport which is used long long ago, also, that was possible' and 'Although it has some disadvantage, I think it is a good experience that go to this museum and relaxing ourselves.' Less successful responses used generally simple structures with frequent errors, which often impeded communication. Examples include 'In the entren of the museum lots of diffing transport way show a huge wall so I not spad any time to search them' and 'The way that make us enjoy is the introduce had many language to translate; if it got more bigger'.

Most responses were well organised and featured accurate use of cohesive devices, such as 'however,' 'moreover,' 'although,' and 'additionally'. For some candidates, paragraphing is an area for improvement, as some reviews were either over-paragraphed or presented in a single block, which tended to affected clarity and organisation. Incorrect punctuation also affected the clarity, especially for candidates who mainly used commas to punctuate their response.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/21
Listening

Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key
1	B	11	A	21	A	31	A
2	C	12	B	22	C	32	D
3	C	13	B	23	A	33	B
4	B	14	C	24	B	34	A
5	A	15	A	25	C	35	B
6	D	16	B	26	A	36	C
7	B	17	A	27	C	37	C
8	D	18	C	28	G	38	B
9	A	19	B	29	H	39	A
10	C	20	C	30	E	40	C

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to take care when transferring their answers from the question paper onto the answer sheet and to shade only one lozenge for each question.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read each question/statement very carefully to ensure they listen for and select the correct relevant detail/idea. They should pay particular attention to words in questions, such as *particularly*, *both*, *most*, *before*, etc.
- In **Exercise 4**, candidates should be reminded that all the details from a statement must be expressed by the speaker for the statement to be the correct response.
- Candidates should also be encouraged to listen to a wider range of listening text types, including longer monologues to ensure they can follow and *navigate* themselves through these texts (e.g., talks and presentations).

General comments

The paper consists of 40 multiple-choice questions and, overall, they were attempted reasonably well by most candidates.

Candidates listened to five exercises, which consisted of monologues (e.g., voicemail messages, extended explanations, descriptions of various experiences), informal dialogues, informal and semi-formal interviews and a longer semi-formal talk. The exercises gradually increased in difficulty and complexity and tested a range of listening skills from listening for specific information (e.g., routines and everyday activities, jobs,

town amenities, jobs and work responsibilities) to listening for more complex ideas (e.g., opinions, feelings, attitudes, reasons, personal preference, comparisons) and understanding the connections between these ideas (e.g., sequencing, ranking, mutual decisions and agreements). The script for each question also contained distracting information, in addition to the targeted key idea, to test the level of detail and the range of grammatical and lexical structures candidates can understand.

Overall, most candidates dealt better with items that focused on identifying specific information and ideas which were stated rather than implied. Many candidates responded equally well to listening to dialogues as well as monologues. More complex ideas, including opinions which are implied, remain a weaker area for some. Some candidates also found items that relied on the understanding of cohesive devices, especially referencing words, relatively challenging.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

In this part of the test, candidates listened to eight short recordings on familiar topics and selected one visual prompt from four options. Overall, candidates performed extremely well in most questions in this set. They particularly excelled in questions which tested listening for a specific detail (e.g., a location, a gift, a type of job). The majority of candidates appeared very familiar with the vocabulary of town amenities, work, locations in the countryside and items of clothing.

Candidates also showed very good understanding of listening for suggestions (e.g., in **Question 3**), personal preferences (e.g., in **Question 4**) and personal decisions (e.g., in **Question 8**).

There were no clear patterns of incorrect responses apart from **Question 1**, where many candidates gave option **D** as their response instead of option **B**. To arrive at the right response, candidates had to select the correct section of a department store and listen for a mutual agreement on the speakers' favourite section. Candidates may have incorrectly selected option **D** as they possibly did not fully understand the referencing expressed by the male speaker: *'I preferred that section to the books section, actually.'* And were tempted by the word 'books'. Most candidate who selected option **D** may have also misunderstood the word 'right', here used to express the female's speaker's acknowledgment in the last turn, rather than her agreement with the male speaker.

Exercise 2

In this part of the test, candidates answered two multiple-choice questions per recording. On the whole, this exercise was attempted very well by most candidates.

Candidates were particularly successful with **Questions 12, 14, 15** and **17**, demonstrating that they are very familiar with the context of people talking about their daily routines, free time activities, travelling, shopping and holidays and the required topic-related vocabulary. **Questions 11, 13** and **18** also produced a fairly high level of success. These questions mostly targeted speaker's feelings and attitudes and the responses given by the speakers were mostly directly stated rather than implied. Candidates dealt equally well with recordings that were presented as dialogues as well as monologues.

Overall, candidates tended to be least successful in **Questions 9** and **10**. **Question 9** targets the speaker's implied opinion about underwater sculptures. The correct response is **A** and about one quarter of candidates provided option **C** as their response. Less successful candidates most likely misunderstood 'whether' as 'weather' and selected the idea referring to storms in option **C**. **Question 10** targets the intention behind these underwater sculptures, expressed by the other speaker. Many candidates were tempted by the speaker referring to sea creatures possibly making the sculptures their home and gave option **B** as their response. However, this wasn't the intention behind the sculptures, but merely the speaker's own prediction. **Question 16** also produced a relatively lower level of success. The question targets a consequence of the speaker's friends borrowing his clothes. The correct response here was **B** (he was upset) and the speaker implies this idea by saying *'...they were quite special things, so it was awful to lose them.'* Some candidates were tempted by *'...and then didn't give them back.'* and selected option **A**; this idea is not correct as the speaker does not mention whether he wondered why this happened.

Exercise 3

This part of the test required candidates to follow a longer talk about bees. Candidates had to complete each of the eight statements with one of the three multiple-choice options. The majority of candidates dealt extremely well with most of the questions in this exercise. Candidates appeared very familiar with the context of volunteering and conservation work and the necessary topic related vocabulary. Candidates particularly excelled at providing correct answers to **Questions 22–25**. These questions tested listening for the speaker's opinions and intentions as well as listening for specific factual information (e.g. names, numbers, roles and responsibilities).

Candidates were slightly less successful in answering **Questions 20** and **21**. Both questions targeted the speaker's personal preference in the form of a ranking order of the ideas in the three options. **Question 20** required candidates to provide the bees' behaviour that the speaker particularly enjoys watching, which is underpinned by '*nothing beats observing them on wild flowers*' in the recording. **Question 21** asks for the aspect that the speaker's most interested in recording. The speaker answers the question when he says: '*...although information about where they are is what's really useful to me*'.

There were no patterns of incorrect responses in this part of the test.

Exercise 4

In this multiple-matching part of the test, candidates were required to match statements to the correct speaker. The statements expressed a range of opinions and explanations about the speakers' favourite food and included, for example, comparisons, personal reasons and the memories the food evokes. Candidates had to choose 6 correct statements from a list of 8. Many candidates performed very well in this exercise. The majority of candidates were particularly successful in **Questions 29, 30** and **32**.

There was a slightly lower level of success in **Questions 27** and **31**. **Question 27** targets the idea of how widely available the ingredients are, underpinned by '*there's never any problem finding what I need in the kitchen to make it*' in the recording. Less successful candidates may have missed the idea of ingredients, as it is not directly stated by the speaker. **Question 31** focuses on what the speaker's friends think of his favourite food. As the correct response relies on understanding the referencing to an earlier detail (i.e., '*And that's the view my college mates seem to take*'), it may have been missed by less successful candidates.

There were no clear patterns of incorrect responses in this exercise.

Exercise 5

In this part of the test, candidates were required to listen to a semi-formal interview with a museum director, about a painting that had to be transported to an exhibition in another country, and answer eight multiple-choice questions. Overall, the majority of candidates attempted this part of the test very well. Candidates particularly excelled in **Questions 34, 36** and **38**, and were also relatively successful in **Questions 35** and **39**. Most of these questions targeted reasons and explanations.

The lowest level of success, for many candidates, was mainly in **Questions 33** and **37**.

There was no clear pattern of wrong responses. However, in **Question 33** many candidates incorrectly gave option **A** as their response. The question targets an explanation given by the speaker to provide information about who the woman in the painting is. The speaker explains that the woman came from a wealthy family, and many candidates appeared to have been tempted by the idea of a royal family in option **A**.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/22
Listening

Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key
1	A	11	C	21	A	31	D
2	B	12	A	22	C	32	H
3	B	13	C	23	C	33	A
4	C	14	B	24	B	34	C
5	D	15	B	25	B	35	B
6	C	16	C	26	A	36	C
7	A	17	A	27	F	37	B
8	B	18	B	28	E	38	C
9	B	19	C	29	B	39	A
10	A	20	B	30	G	40	A

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to take care when transferring their answers from the question paper onto the answer sheet and to shade only one lozenge for each question.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read each question/statement very carefully to ensure they listen for and select the correct relevant detail/idea. They should pay particular attention to words in questions, such as *most*, *particular*, *the majority of*, *both*, *first/last time*, etc.
- In **Exercise 4**, candidates need to remember what the main focus of each monologue is (e.g., a documentary series on the environment) in order to be able to rule out distracting information. They should be reminded that all the details from a statement must be expressed by a speaker for the statement to be the correct response.
- Candidates should also be encouraged to listen to a wider range of listening text types, including longer monologues to ensure they can follow and *navigate* themselves through these texts (e.g., talks and presentations).

General comments

The paper consists of 40 multiple-choice questions and, overall, they were attempted reasonably well by most candidates.

Candidates listened to five exercises which consisted of monologues (e.g., voicemail messages, extended explanations, descriptions), informal dialogues, informal and semi-formal interviews and a longer semi-formal

talk. The exercises gradually increased in difficulty and complexity and tested a range of listening skills from listening for specific information (e.g., routines and everyday activities, food items and sports) to listening for more complex ideas (e.g., opinions, attitudes, reasons, personal preferences, and evaluations) and understanding the connections between these ideas (e.g., sequencing, ranking, mutual decisions and agreements). The script for each question also contained distracting information, in addition to the targeted key idea, to test the level of detail and the range of grammatical and lexical structures candidates can understand.

Overall, most candidates dealt better with items that focused on identifying specific information which was stated rather than implied. Many candidates also seemed to have found everyday exchanges in the form of a dialogue easier to follow than tasks that took the form of monologues, or extended monologues. Only about half of all candidates dealt well with items which focused on more complex ideas, such as speakers' opinions, and the connections between these ideas.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

In this part of the test, candidates listened to eight short recordings on familiar topics and selected one visual prompt from four options. Overall, candidates performed reasonably well in most questions in this set and it was **Question 5** and **7** that were answered correctly by the majority of candidates, demonstrating extremely good understanding of explanations, future intentions, decisions and mutual agreements. This also suggests that many candidates are very familiar with the vocabulary of everyday objects and TV and types of films. Many candidates also achieved a reasonably high level of success in **Question 1** and **3**, which tested personal preferences set around the topics of sports and other free time activities.

Questions 2 and **6** did not seem to be fully understood. These two questions targeted food items and a place of work. In **Question 2**, less successful candidates were distracted by option **C**, most likely because of the mention of '*chicken*' in the recording. However, chicken was merely one of the toppings for the pizza that the boy was helping to make.

Candidates were least successful with **Question 8**, as many were tempted by option **D** and the mention of 'video' in the recording. Less successful candidates may also have missed the use of the past continuous tense '*were watching*', which clearly rules out this idea as the question targets what the students *will* do in their lesson. Less successful candidates may also have missed the correct response as it was given in two parts: '*Today, you're going to use ..., to create a visual display for the classroom.*'

Exercise 2

In this part of the test, candidates answered two multiple-choice questions per recording. Overall, this exercise was well attempted.

Candidates were particularly successful with **Question 16**, demonstrating good listening skills for specific ideas such as attitudes and preferences. They appeared very familiar with the context of the internet and fashion design and the topic-related vocabulary. **Questions 12–14** also produced a fairly high level of success. These questions mostly targeted personal preferences, mutual agreements and explanations.

Overall, candidates tended to be less successful with questions which took the form of monologues (e.g., an extract from a presentation) or extended monologues (e.g., part of an interview). This was particularly the case in **Questions 10** and **11**, which did not seem to be fully understood. In **Question 10** many candidates selected option **B** instead of option **A**. The question targets what the girl disliked about her tree planting session and less successful candidates may have been tempted by the mention of '*old industrial buildings*'. However, the speaker only comments on these as something she'd never seen before, not something she disliked. Some candidates may also have been unfamiliar with the phrases '*took forever*' and '*I could've done without*', which support the key. In **Question 11**, option **B** was sometimes selected in error. This question targets the reason why the speaker has done less work on her Geography project than expected. Less successful candidates were possibly steered towards the option because of the mention of homework in the recording. As the reason was only implied in the recording: '*My dad's hurt his leg, nothing serious, but it's meant I've been doing some of the stuff he'd normally do because Mum works full-time.*' some candidates may not have understood it as the same idea as the one given in the correct option **C**.

Exercise 3

This part of the test required candidates to follow a longer talk about the Sand Life sand sculpture festival. Candidates had to complete each of the eight statements with one of the three multiple-choice options. On the whole, candidates dealt reasonably well with most of the questions in this exercise.

Candidates were most successful with **Question 20** and demonstrated very good listening skills for specific detail, in this case a number. Many candidates also performed fairly well in **Questions 22, 23, 25** and **26**. These questions tested specific details as well as more complex ideas, for example a recommendation and reason.

However, it was **Question 24** that which did not seem to be fully understood by most candidates. The question targets what surprised the speaker about the sculptures the first time she went to the festival. Around 40 per cent of candidates selected option **A** in error, most likely tempted by the speaker referring to the sculptures as *'massive'*. Even though the speaker says that the size of the sculptures was impressive, it was the originality that surprised her. The idea of the surprising aspect was supported in the recording by the phrase: *'nothing could have prepared me for'* and the adjective *'unique'*.

Exercise 4

In this multiple-matching part of the test, candidates were required to match statements to the correct speaker. The statements expressed ideas about an environmental documentary series called *Green Tide* and included, for example, opinions, feelings, regrets and explanations. Candidates had to choose six correct statements from a list of 8. Many found this exercise challenging and there was a mixed level of success.

The majority of candidates selected the correct ideas for speakers 1 and 2 (**Questions 27** and **28**). However, it was speakers 3–6 (**Questions 29–32**) which did not seem to be fully understood by many candidates, and speaker 5 (**Question 31**) produced the lowest level of success with only about 25 percent of all candidates selecting the correct idea in statement **D**. The idea in statement **C** was often given in error. The idea in statement **C** states that the speaker has changed some of their routine because of it, 'it' refers back to the topic of the documentary series in the main rubric. However, Speaker 5 (**Question 31**) says: *'I'd already started using less electricity and water'*, which clearly states that she had changed her routine before watching the documentary series. Despite this, many candidates were possibly distracted by this and provided the incorrect response.

There was no clear pattern of why candidates chose incorrect responses for **Questions 29, 30** and **32**.

Exercise 5

In this part of the test, candidates were required to listen to a semi-formal interview with a professional opera singer and answer 8 multiple-choice questions. Overall, most candidates attempted this part of the test fairly well. Candidates particularly excelled in **Question 33** and **34**, which both targeted reasons. Many were also successful in **Question 38** and **39** and demonstrated good listening skills when identifying the speaker's future intentions and listening to evaluations. Candidates also showed good understanding of relevant vocabulary, including phrasal verbs (e.g., give up) and other fixed expressions (e.g., *'giving that some serious thought'*).

While **Question 35** was attempted reasonably well, less successful candidates sometimes gave option **A** ('astonished by audience's reaction') in error, possibly distracted by the speaker referring to 'clapping and cheering' in the recording.

The lowest level of success for many candidates was mainly in **Question 36** and **40**, which targeted the speaker's explanations and recommendations. In **Question 36**, almost one quarter of all candidates incorrectly provided option **B** as their response, most likely distracted by the word 'voice' in the recording and the option itself. Some candidates were possibly unfamiliar with the phrase *'no end'* used in the recording and clearly linking it back to the question and the word 'greatly'. In **Question 40** option **C** ('a local group that puts on performances') was often selected in error, with many candidates possibly being tempted by the mention of *'rural location'* and *'operatic societies'*.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/31
Speaking

Key messages

- Most centres conducted the tests in line with the instructions included in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes, submitted appropriate recordings and accurately completed the Speaking Examination Summary Form.
- Examiners are advised to use the Examiner's script in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes for all parts of the test.
- Examiners should use the follow-up questions on page 6 of the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes for eliciting further discussion.
- Pronunciation should be assessed separately to other criteria. To achieve high marks for Pronunciation, candidates should demonstrate effective use of intonation patterns.
- Internal moderation should be completed when there is more than one Examiner.
- Candidates would benefit from regular practice talking about everyday topics and agreeing and disagreeing with opinions. They should be able to explain why they hold certain opinions.
- Stronger responses used cohesive and signalling devices to expand arguments, refer to previous points and provide examples.

General comments

Introduction

Most Examiners followed the instructions. They provided the necessary candidate and centre details and read the Examiner script.

Warm-up

This part of the test was generally well conducted with appropriate timing. Most candidates were asked all three questions. Some Examiners employed follow-up questions skilfully to encourage more reticent candidates to expand on their answers.

Part 1: Interview

This part of the test was generally carried out as per the script but occasionally not all questions were used. Where responses were brief, not all Examiners showed an awareness of the guidance in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes on how to elicit further responses, and some tended to ask unscripted questions.

Part 2 – Short talk

Candidates benefit from using the full amount of preparation time. Examiners should avoid interrupting candidates during the talk as this often disadvantages them. Candidates need to practise comparing two situations, identifying advantages and disadvantages and explaining their choice/conclusion. They should practise using adjectives of comparison and appropriate linking words to aid their discussion.

Part 3 – Discussion

Most Examiners used the prompts in the order given. As with **Parts 1 and 2**, Examiners are reminded to follow the guidance on what to do to elicit further responses rather than asking their own questions related to

the topic. Strong responses to the questions in this part of the test included conditionals to speculate and clear arguments for advantages and disadvantages. They also included reasons for opinions and gave examples.

Application of the marking criteria

Grammar

Some Examiners seem to be reluctant to award top marks for very strong responses; Examiners may have placed too much weight on particular errors and disregarded more accurate usage in a range of structures elsewhere.

Vocabulary

Some severe marking may have resulted from focusing too much on topic-related vocabulary, rather than taking into consideration the candidate's ability to use more general vocabulary effectively. Effective and accurate use of collocations and phrasal verbs by candidates was not always credited.

Development

Where there was severe marking, this was sometimes the result of placing too much emphasis on the candidate's performance in **Part 2**, despite the candidate showing an ability to develop their responses in **Parts 1** and **3**. Similarly, Development was sometimes marked generously as the candidate demonstrated development of ideas in **Part 2** but ideas were not consistently developed in **Parts 1** and **3**.

Higher marks may also have been awarded because of how much support Examiners felt had or had not been given according to the marking criteria. Some candidates did not need, or receive, any support but they did not always consistently develop their responses.

Pronunciation

Clarity of speech seems to be the main factor considered when awarding higher marks, rather than other factors such as voice inflections, tone and pitch of the voice to carry meaning. Some weaker candidates were awarded low marks for Pronunciation because of low marks in the other three criteria but communication had not been impeded.

Administration

Recordings

Most centres provided recordings of good quality. Where it was of a lower standard, it was because the candidate was not situated near the recording device. Areas where noise can intrude should also be avoided if possible.

Documentation

This was generally done accurately. However, centres should ensure they only include candidates on the Speaking Examination Summary Form who took the test and have a recording and/or marks on the Submit for Assessment platform to avoid delays in moderation.

Internal moderation

Centres should follow the guidance on how to conduct internal moderation available on the Cambridge International website.

If more than one examiner is used, the candidates' marks must be internally moderated to ensure a common standard is applied to all candidates. The lead examiner should listen to a range of candidates (top, middle, bottom) from each examiner identifying if adjustments are required. If no adjustments are required to an examiner's marks, these are the final total marks that should be submitted to Cambridge International. Centres are reminded it is the internally moderated mark rather than the final mark which should be submitted on Submit for Assessment.

General advice on how to approach the speaking assessments

Part 1

Strong responses to questions were relevant and well developed. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should attempt to use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and future tenses or conditional sentences when asked to speculate about the future. They should also provide examples to support their views.

Part 2

Strong responses included a range of structures (e.g. conditionals, comparatives) and topic-specific language. The most effective approach was to summarise, then develop the talk by considering both options before giving a final opinion on which was the preferred option, and why.

Part 3

Stronger candidates were able to develop their responses at length by expanding with personal examples using a variety of tenses, verb patterns and linking devices. Strong responses included a wide range of vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions, used a range of grammatical structures and were well developed.

Comments on specific speaking questions

Speaking Assessment A

Part 1

Interview – Games and sport

Strong responses were relevant and well developed using a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary (e.g. 'podium', 'championship', 'strategies', 'rivalry', 'tournament', 'man of the match'). Personal experiences were discussed, (e.g. 'I have tried many sports'; 'I don't enjoy any of them') and advantages and disadvantages of sport being played at school every day were considered. There was appropriate use of idioms such as 'as fit as a fiddle.'

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies (incorrect subject/verb agreement, for example). To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use, or attempt to use, a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and conditional tenses when asked to speculate about a hypothetical situation.

Part 2

Short talk – Your future career

All candidates understood what each job entailed and were able to compare them. Strong responses included a range of structures such as conditionals, comparatives and topic-specific language (e.g. 'a lawyer job pays well'; 'defend people's rights'; 'earn more respect'; 'studying for many years'; 'know where your food comes from'). The most successful approach was to develop the talk by comparing income level, working conditions and studying time for each profession and then give a final opinion on which option was preferred and why.

Weaker responses were shorter and tended to focus only on the chosen option. They considered either advantages or disadvantages, rather than both, and said very little about the second option.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates responded relevantly at length and used a wide range of vocabulary and structures to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions. Most candidates spoke about happiness being more important than money, ('money is not the ultimate goal') and some used the conditional ('if you earn a lot of money...').

Candidates are very knowledgeable about AI, and **Question 3** elicited discussion on ‘repetitive tasks’, ChatGPT, critical thinking, jobs which involve emotions (therapists, doctors) and whether teachers could be replaced with AI.

Weaker responses were mostly relevant, although shorter and limited in their range of structures and vocabulary. They lacked the language of speculation so found it difficult to respond to the final two questions.

Speaking Assessment B

Part 1

Interview – Towns and cities

All candidates were able describe places that tourists like to visit (e.g. a zoo, a museum, a park). Strong responses were relevant and well developed using a wide range of vocabulary and both simple and complex structures with particular emphasis on appropriate verb tenses such as past simple and past continuous. Stronger candidates also used comparatives and superlatives to compare buses with other forms of transport (e.g. ‘more convenient’, ‘less comfortable’). There were also examples of hypothetical structures such as ‘I wish we/they had been...’. Topic-specific vocabulary such as ‘scenery’ and ‘monument’ and appropriate adjectives were used to describe capital cities.

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and a limited range of grammar structures. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use, or attempt to use, a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and present tenses, including adverbs of frequency when asked to speak about trends and habits.

Part 2

Short talk – A school trip

Strong responses included a range of structures (e.g. conditionals, comparatives) and topic-specific language (e.g. ‘sandcastles’, ‘water sports’, ‘gift shop’, ‘species’). Stronger candidates tended to consider each option in turn, before deciding on a preference.

Weaker candidates frequently changed between the two options often leading to repetition. They also sometimes focused only on the chosen option with very little comment on the second option. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should talk about both options first, then state what they would prefer and use language of comparison to help develop their responses.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates used emphatic intonation (e.g. ‘Yes, they absolutely should’). They also used a wide range of vocabulary and structures to discuss facts and opinions. There was some topic-specific vocabulary (e.g. ‘hunt’, ‘ambush their prey’, ‘get overfed’, ‘natural instincts’). Candidates referred to swimming being a ‘vital life skill’ and mentioned ‘lifesaving’ and ‘saving [someone’s] life’ in relation to the importance of learning how to swim.

Weaker responses tended to be short and used a limited range of structures and vocabulary.

Speaking Assessment C

Part 1

Interview – Holidays

Strong responses elicited a wide range of vocabulary and both simple and complex structures (e.g. ‘because I have family there’, ‘cultural curiosity’, ‘a love of the food’, ‘the weather’, ‘affordability’, ‘ease of getting to a destination’, ‘distance from my home country’, ‘ability to speak the language’). **Question 2** elicited modal verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and extended sentences using conjunctions.

Weaker responses were characterised by simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies in the use of tenses as well as frequent repetition of the words in the question.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should develop their descriptive vocabulary, including adjectives and adverbs, and ensure verb tense and agreement is secure.

Part 2

Short talk – A writing competition

Some candidates were unclear about the focus of the second option (a local sports event) and needed clarification. Stronger candidates discussed the advantages of each option before comparing the disadvantages. Stronger candidates used linking phrases, comparatives, passives and phrasal verbs (e.g. 'In my opinion'; 'you are not required to have a good imagination'; 'you may need to be familiar with the sport you are writing about').

Weaker responses tended to either focus on the chosen option and say very little about the second option or talk about both options at the same time with no clear order.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should consider both options in turn before stating and justifying a preference.

Part 3

Discussion

Strong responses were relevant and well developed. They included appropriate and precise vocabulary (e.g. 'entirely for pleasure'; 'in this day and age') to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions as well as a range of simple and complex structures (e.g. 'watching the news on TV is more engaging'; 'more entertaining'; 'it can be a bit biased').

Weaker responses included mainly relevant answers but used a limited range of structures and vocabulary. Some candidates were able to express an opinion about each question but were not able to expand by providing reasons for their opinions.

Speaking Assessment D

Part 1

Interview – Eating

Stronger responses to **Question 1** moved away from the present to use the past simple, describing the last time they ate something or when they ate it for the first time. Stronger responses included less common lexis (e.g. 'carbohydrates', 'protein', 'seafood', 'digest'). Stronger responses were also well developed (e.g. 'which we celebrated because...'; 'we decorated the table with balloons before arriving'; 'young children would be more inclined to...').

Weaker responses were more limited with the candidate often just using the present simple tense and naming favourite dishes. There were also noticeable errors in grammar, sometimes only using the present simple tense or mixing the present and past tense, often resulting in issues with subject-verb agreement.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they attempt to use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and future forms/conditionals to hypothesise. To help candidates improve, centres should focus on expanding their vocabulary range on everyday topics.

Part 2

Short talk – Getting work experience

Stronger responses had a clear structure, with candidates stating their preference after considering both options. There was good use of linking words and structures (e.g. 'Honestly'; 'as a person that doesn't like...'; 'I don't think working with animals would suit me'; 'However'; 'I also don't want to stay in a room all day'; 'In my view...'; 'working on a farm would be harder'; 'I don't like getting dirty').

Stronger responses also often included the use of the second conditional or future continuous (e.g. 'If I worked on a farm...'; 'You will be producing and growing...') and less common topic-specific vocabulary (e.g. 'insufficient fertilisation', 'soil', 'socialising with co-worker', 'crops', 'drought').

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should use the preparation time wisely and avoid repeating ideas, instead developing them with reasons and examples as well as range of grammar and vocabulary. They should demonstrate good use of linking devices as well as functional exponents for opinions, advantages and disadvantages.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger responses were more developed and demonstrated a range of grammar structures, vocabulary and linking words (e.g. 'It's up to the young person to choose his career due to the fact that'; 'but it depends on the type of job you are doing'.)

Weaker responses included opinions which addressed the questions but were often very short and limited in scope.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should develop their answers and use a wider range of structures and vocabulary. Candidates should build up their topic-based vocabulary during exam preparation so that they have the necessary lexis to be able to discuss common topics such as work.

Speaking Assessment E

Part 1

Interview – Celebrities

Stronger responses addressed the questions and provided justification for opinions (e.g. 'her music is calm and soothing'; 'when I am doing my homework'). They demonstrated good use of the language of speculation, with effective use of linking words and conditionals (e.g. 'if you had enough money to do anything you wanted you could...'). Candidates often suggested that being rich gave freedom to do what you want.

Weaker responses were often limited to a list of names and used a limited range of grammar structures such as the present simple (e.g. 'I like him because I like his songs.').

To achieve the highest marks, candidates are advised to justify their answers rather than simply stating 'yes' or 'no'. They should understand that the questions will elicit different grammatical structures ranging from the present simple through to the past and future forms. They should be able to use the simple language of opinion and linking words to produce compound sentences.

Part 2

Short talk – Family activities

All candidates were able to comment on the two options. Their preferences were evenly divided between going to the cinema and going on a bike ride. Stronger responses were organised, balanced and developed, and included more accurate use of complex structures such as the gerund, conditionals and passives (e.g. 'I prefer the bike ride because I can see everything I want on the internet'; 'If we went together as a family on a bike ride...'; 'I think we could create a sense of being together'; 'I don't think it would be difficult to find one [a film] that we all like'). Stronger responses also included a range of linking expressions and 'signposts' for their talk (e.g. 'I'm going to talk about family activities and will begin with'; 'this is ideal for my sport-loving family'; 'going to the cinema would be pricey because...').

Weaker responses mainly used the simple vocabulary of likes or dislikes and were often very short.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should evaluate both options and reach a final decision based on their arguments and opinions. They should use discourse markers to organise their answers and try to incorporate a range of structures and topic-based vocabulary.

Part 3

Discussion

Most candidates tended to focus on clothes shopping. Candidates felt that their friends were likely to give an honest opinion (e.g. 'Your friends have their opinion'; 'this is not good for you, but this one is better'). Stronger responses argued that family advice was based on what their parents perceived to be the expectations of society and included a wide range of vocabulary and grammar (e.g. 'your dopamine levels are increasing'; 'you are getting more oxygen into your body'; 'doing any cardiovascular exercise is good'; 'demotivating').

Weaker responses included mainly relevant ideas but used a limited range of vocabulary and sentence structures. Some candidates required frequent support and prompting to ensure that they elaborated on their opinions. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should try to develop all questions and include a wider range of structures and vocabulary.

Speaking Assessment F

Part 1

Interview – Using plastic

Strong responses included a range of vocabulary and collocations connected to the environment (e.g. 'marine life', 'biodegradable', 'promote recycling'). Stronger responses were also able to develop ideas using phrasal verbs and more complex sentence structures (e.g. 'plastic waste ends up in the oceans'; 'turtles tend to eat it without knowing what it is').

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies (such as incorrect subject/verb agreement). Responses were often limited to listing with little expansion.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and conditional tenses when asked to speculate about a hypothetical situation

Part 2

Short talk – Organising a birthday celebration

Stronger candidates used complex structures such as conditionals and relative clauses effectively (e.g. 'If we went to a local restaurant, we wouldn't be able to...'; 'which is what we usually do...'). They were able to develop their ideas, with some comparison of how expensive each option would be, or how difficult it would be to keep the surprise party a secret.

Weaker responses tended to be repetitive and only focussed on the preferred option leading to a talk that was too short.

Part 3

Discussion

Most candidates agreed that celebrating birthdays was important (e.g. 'it creates special memories'; 'it makes a person feel important'; 'everyone deserves it'). Stronger candidates developed their ideas by comparing gift-giving among different cultures, age groups or relationships (e.g. 'it can be seen as an insult to some people; depending on their culture and traditions') and talking about the different relationships with family and friends, often using comparative structures (e.g. 'they know you better').

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with errors in subject/verb agreement. They often only used the present tense.

Speaking Assessment G

Part 1

Interview – Films

Most candidates used a range of vocabulary to talk about film genres (e.g. action, comedy, science fiction). Past tense and comparatives were used by stronger candidates (e.g. 'I used to like Batman'; 'It's easier to concentrate when there are images'; 'films do not portray every single thing that was in the books').

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and structures and included frequent errors in the use of tense and prepositions.

Part 2

Short talk – Making a change

Stronger candidates were able to discuss a variety of advantages and disadvantages for each option, using appropriate vocabulary and a range of grammatical structures (e.g. 'students can immerse themselves in new books'). Many candidates expressed the idea that the sports hall would be the more popular choice and developed it by talking about the benefits of team sports and keeping fit.

Weaker responses tended to focus on the chosen option and said very little about the second option.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates discussed a range of reasons why students should help maintain school buildings (e.g. 'it improves your social skills'; 'you have the ability to repair things'). The second option generated conditional structures from stronger candidates (e.g. 'If your school happens to be far away from your home; you will need...') and a range of vocabulary (e.g. 'healthcare facilities', 'priority').

Weaker responses included mainly relevant answers with a limited range of structures and did not develop their ideas. Pronunciation was not always clear, and intonation was rarely used to convey intended meaning.

Speaking Assessment H

Part 1

Interview – Family life

Strong candidates were able to develop their answers to all three questions using appropriate and accurate use of tenses, simple and complex sentence structures and personal examples. They used appropriate and often sophisticated vocabulary (e.g. 'go back to the same place'; 'get along well with'; 'confide in someone', 'it was a nice change of pace'; 'friends come and go'; 'extended family'; 'family tree').

Weaker candidates used mainly simple structures, with some inaccuracies in subject-verb agreement and prepositions. There were frequent pauses while searching for words and ideas and candidates tended to default to present tenses for the **Question 2**. Pronunciation was not always clear, and intonation was generally not used.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use a wider range of sentence structures. When discussing past events, they should use, or attempt to use, a variety of past tenses and aim to develop their answers more fully by providing further examples. They should also vary their intonation to convey meaning.

Part 2

Short talk – A school event

Stronger candidates discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both options first before stating their final preference. They explored both options in a balanced way, demonstrating the ability to compare and evaluate. Relevant and well developed answers were given, covering a range of complex structures and making use of discourse markers (e.g. 'if I had to choose...'; 'I'd most probably choose...') as well as comparative/superlative structures to compare options.

Weaker candidates did not fully develop or structure their responses. They tended to provide brief comments on the two options and often repeated the same points in an effort to speak for longer. Some candidates moved too quickly to their final choice without sufficient comparison.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should aim to explore both options in equal depth, using a variety of structures and vocabulary, before clearly justifying their final preference.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates were able to use a wide variety of lexis and structures and demonstrate a good range of intonation patterns to clearly articulate their views. They included a wide range of vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and personal experiences, (e.g. 'sometimes I'd rather they weren't there'; 'as much as it pains me to say it'; 'if students have the opportunity to go on school trips...'; 'influencers who are not necessarily talented in what they do...').

Weaker candidates gave mainly relevant answers but used a limited range of structures and vocabulary and did not develop their responses with further examples. They gave opinions which were either unclear or contradictory. They were not always able to generate sufficient arguments to support their opinions, leading to undeveloped responses

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use a wider range of language structures and aim to extend their ideas more fully, even on less familiar topics.

Speaking Assessment I

Part 1

Interview – Modern technology

Stronger candidates used present tenses accurately when describing their routines and the role of technology in their lives. They also used a range of past tenses and demonstrated good control of vocabulary to describe their experiences using appropriate and accurate narrative tenses for **Question 2** and conditional forms for **Question 3** (e.g. 'in the end'; 'we realised we weren't so addicted to our phones'; 'we have to set limits'; 'confiscated due to'; 'not doing homework or skipping classes'; 'grounded'). They used pronunciation and intonation effectively to emphasise key points in the responses.

Weaker responses often lacked the depth needed to support opinions. They rarely included concrete examples or well developed arguments, which limited their overall effectiveness. Some candidates had little to say beyond listing a few household machines and tended to use only present tenses for **Question 2**.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should aim to support their views with relevant examples and ensure their responses are well structured, fully developed and include a wide range of vocabulary.

Part 2

Short talk – A new home

All candidates were able to make clear personal connections to the two options presented. Responses were generally well developed, with candidates offering detailed examples of how each option would suit their lifestyle and the needs of their families.

Stronger candidates used a wide range of comparative structures effectively throughout and consistently provided a range of arguments to support their preferences, resulting in responses that were both engaging and insightful. Vocabulary was both accurate and appropriately varied (e.g. 'having BBQs and hosting pool parties in the summer'; 'tanning on the balcony'; 'not being a gardening type person'; 'space might not be able to accommodate the family'; 'even if we didn't have a swimming pool it would be...').

Weaker candidates used only a sufficient range of vocabulary and grammar; there was a lack of cohesive devices and discourse markers that would strengthen responses. Their discussion of the options was often unbalanced, or they omitted any justification for their final choice.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates used a wide range of vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and personal experiences (e.g. 'even if we lived in an old/small house'; 'in a dump'; 'had no money'; 'extremely poor', 'sense of community'; 'rural areas').

Weaker candidates provided only very short, undeveloped answers. They gave responses using a limited range of structures and vocabulary and did not develop with further examples.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should aim to extend their responses beyond a brief opinion, using clear explanations, personal experiences, and a range of vocabulary and structures to express their ideas effectively.

Speaking Assessment J

Part 1

Interview – A healthy lifestyle

There was a range of responses about different ways to relax from listening to music to hanging out with friends with many candidates using topic-specific vocabulary. Many candidates were able to distinguish between physical and mental relaxation, producing a wider range of ideas and vocabulary and giving reasons (e.g. 'helps me to stay active'; 'release endorphins'; 'improve my mood'; 'feeling of satisfaction').

Stronger candidates used past perfect forms and a range of narrative tenses (e.g. 'I had been thinking about losing weight'; 'I visited the gym during the school holiday'; 'I improved my physical skills'; 'I became more aware of what I needed to do'). They used comparative language and conditionals as well as precise vocabulary connected to diet, or collocations (e.g. 'have a balanced diet'; 'clean and wholesome food'; 'carbohydrates'; 'protein'; 'you are what you eat').

Weaker candidates talked about how people can keep fit in general rather than considering personal experience. They paused frequently to search for words and ideas and tended to default to present tenses for **Question 2**, describing their current fitness regime.

Part 2

Short talk: Learning a language

Stronger candidates considered both options before deciding on a preference. They used a clear structure for the talk which included an introduction, a list of advantages/disadvantages as well as a decision and reason. They used a wide range of vocabulary (e.g. 'feedback from teachers'; 'asking questions'; 'can be expensive'; 'class participation'; 'can result in an easy way of learning'; 'to further learn even more') and discussed different personalities of learners: whether they were an introvert or extrovert and how the different styles of teaching suited them, for example. They also talked about the benefits of AI with language learning and what might happen in the future.

Weaker candidates simply listed different apps and films that could be used for learning. They were more likely to focus on only the option that reflected their own experience rather than taking a broader view.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates were able to develop their responses using a range of grammatical structures including modal verbs, relative clauses, conditionals and superlatives (e.g. 'It might be better not to go as a beginner'). They used a range of vocabulary (e.g. 'to speak more fluently'; 'mother tongue'; 'learning a language first hand'; 'to communicate'; 'live in other countries and adapt easily') and discussed AI and teaching tools and accessibility.

Weaker responses included mainly relevant points but used a limited range of structures and vocabulary and were less developed.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/32
Speaking

Key messages

- Most centres conducted the tests in line with the instructions included in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes, submitted appropriate recordings and accurately completed Speaking Examination Summary Forms.
- Examiners should list the candidates in candidate number order on the Speaking Examination Summary Form.
- Background noise should be minimised as this can affect candidates' performance. This is a formal examination, and a quiet, secure room should be used.
- Examiners are reminded to keep to the timings stated for each section of the test. Timings were generally accurately observed.
- All assessed parts of the test must be from the same Speaking Assessment card unless a topic is inappropriate for the candidate.
- Examiners should follow the script exactly as it appears in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes and familiarise themselves with the conduct of each section very carefully before the examination, especially what to do in situations when candidates need further prompting.
- Internal moderation should be completed when there is more than one Examiner and should be done for all the Examiners at the centre. Any individual changed marks should be shown on the Speaking Examination Summary Form.
- Candidates should listen carefully to the tense used in each question to respond with precision.
- Examiners should be reminded not to interrupt or ask questions during the **Part 2** talk. They should also be aware that they should stop the candidate if the talk goes over two minutes.
- Candidates would benefit from practice prior to the actual test. They should practise giving the **Part 2** talk in two minutes to become accustomed to the timing and structure of this part of the test. They are advised to talk about both options equally, as well as the advantages and disadvantages, etc. of each option. Candidates should conclude their talk by stating their preference and reason why, summing up the main points they have made.

General comments

Introduction

Almost all centres followed the script and correctly informed candidates about which parts of the test would be assessed. Examiners should note that it is much easier to simply read the script than attempt to paraphrase it.

Warm-up

This part of the test was generally well conducted, with appropriate timing and language. Some Examiners occasionally rushed which resulted in a short warm-up.

Part 1: Interview

This part of the test was generally carried out as per the script but occasionally, not all questions were used. When candidates provide very short answers, Examiners should encourage candidates to expand by asking for a brief explanation or specific examples. Some candidates responded in the present tense to **Question 2** which targeted a narrative or a personal anecdote. If the candidate is asked about a past event and the

candidate responds in the present tense, Examiners should ask another question to try and encourage candidates to speak about a past event. Candidates are always credited for taking the opportunity to use past tenses when required.

Part 2: Short talk

The timings of the preparation period and short talk were mostly appropriate. Stronger candidates used the preparation time to organise their talks into clear sections with development and appropriate linking, more complex structures and advanced vocabulary. Weaker candidates were less organised and often repeated the same ideas. Many candidates began their short talk by reading or summarising the task on the card and not all candidates ended their talk by stating their preference. Although Examiners announced that the short talk would last for two minutes, many did not interrupt candidates who continued speaking beyond the time limit. If a candidate finished early, some Examiners asked if they had more to add, while others allowed them to stop. In a small number of centres, Examiners treated this as a discussion and interrupted the candidate too often. Candidates who had practised and were familiar with this type of task performed better overall.

Part 3: Discussion

Having completed **Parts 1 and 2** of the tests, many candidates relaxed and often excelled in giving opinions and developing the discussion using a good range of structures and vocabulary. Examiners are reminded to follow the guidance on what to do to elicit further responses; candidates benefitted when Examiners commented on what the candidates had said and used follow-up questions to encourage development. It is advisable for Examiners to rephrase questions when the candidate has not understood.

Application of the marking criteria

Grammar

There was a tendency was to mark generously in the upper mark range because of accuracy even though a wide range of structures was not evident or because candidates spoke naturally but without using more sophisticated forms. Candidates should be credited for their ability to use a range of complex structures such as passive structures, conditional sentences, relative clauses and variety of modal verbs and tenses.

Vocabulary

This tended to be marked generously in the higher mark range with some Examiners not taking 'with precision' into account sufficiently. In the lower mark range, some centres marked slightly severely, as Examiners failed to credit lexical structures such as collocations or fixed expressions.

Development

Some Examiners conflated development with ability to be able to talk without long pauses, meaning that weaker candidates who repeated ideas without developing them were awarded higher marks than they deserved. Some candidates were put into the top band if they had not needed (or received) any support during the assessment which was not always appropriate.

Pronunciation

The mark given was often matched to marks for other criteria, even if, for example, an otherwise weak candidate had good pronunciation and use of intonation, or vice-versa, resulting in some candidates being double-penalised. Examiners should remember to consider the use of intonation, particularly when awarding top level marks, e.g., 'I do think it's crucial.'

Administration

Recordings

Most centres provided recordings of high quality. Where it was of a lower standard, it was because the candidate was not situated near the recording device. Areas where noise can intrude should be avoided if possible. Centres should check the quality and accuracy of the recordings before submitting.

Documentation

Most centres carried out the administration well. Centres should be reminded that candidates should be listed according to their candidate number. Occasionally, attendance forms were submitted instead of the Speaking Examination Summary Form containing the candidates' marks. There were several errors in the transfer of the internally moderated mark from the summary form to the mark submitted on Submit for Assessment. All the candidates examined by each Examiner should be on the same Speaking Examination Summary Form in order to limit the number of forms submitted, particularly by larger entries.

Internal moderation

If more than one Examiner is used, the candidates' marks must be internally moderated to ensure a common standard is applied to all candidates. To do this, the lead Examiner should listen to a range of candidates (top, middle, bottom) from each Examiner, identifying if there are points on the mark range where adjustments are required. This will produce a consistent rank order of candidates across all Examiners at your centre. If no adjustments are required to an Examiner's marks, these are the final total marks that should be submitted. If an adjustment to an Examiner's marks is required, the lead Examiner should make this adjustment to all the marks given by that Examiner in that mark range. The adjusted marks are then the final total marks which should be submitted.

General advice on how to approach the speaking assessments

Part 1

Strong responses to questions were relevant and well developed. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should attempt to use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and future tenses or conditional sentences when asked to speculate about the future. They should also provide examples to support their views.

Part 2

Stronger candidates were able to compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of each activity and then give a final opinion on which option they would prefer and why. Strong responses included a range of structures (for example, conditionals and comparatives) and topic-specific language. Candidates should be encouraged to practise presenting both sides of an argument, as this will allow them to use a wider range of vocabulary.

Part 3

Stronger candidates were able to develop their responses at length by expanding with more personal examples using a variety of tenses, verb patterns and linking devices. Strong responses included a wide range of vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions, used a range of grammatical structures and were well developed.

Comments on specific speaking assessments

Speaking Assessment A

Part 1

Interview – Being creative

Ideas about being creative included making things from paper and doing art or drama at school. Stronger candidates described traditional crafts and expanded their talk by saying how they learnt about these from their family members. Stronger responses included a variety of past tenses including 'used to' and 'would' for past habits to describe creative activities done as a child. Conditionals were also used to discuss whether people like to receive handmade gifts. Stronger candidates used a range (e.g. 'When I was a child, I loved drawing coming characters'; 'I spent hours doing that every day'; 'she's always making something from nothing'), as well as phrasal verbs, the present perfect and comparatives (e.g. 'a gift I could never forget').

Weaker candidates were limited to present simple tense for questions about a creative person and creative activities in the past. Only the first conditional was used briefly to discuss handmade gifts. Responses were vague and used repetitive statements, (e.g. 'Yes, I liked painting when I was small. It was fun.').

Part 2

Short talk – Clothes for school

Stronger responses included a variety of comparative forms, such as ‘not as + adjective + as’, a variety of modals used for speculation and deduction and linking devices, e.g. ‘However,’ and ‘on the one hand’ which helped to develop the options and demonstrated lexical flexibility. Justifications were given for their preferred choice (e.g. ‘it creates a sense of equality’; ‘you can express your personality’; ‘create fairness’; ‘they’ll look like they belong’).

Weaker candidates tended to discuss only their preferred option in limited detail, using ‘more + adjective + than’ and the simple modals ‘can’ and ‘may’. This often led to repetition, thus affecting the mark for development. Candidates are reminded to evaluate both options and reach a final decision.

Part 3

Discussion

Many weaker candidates missed the ‘only’ element of the third statement. Stronger candidates gave extensive responses which included detailed examples and reasons and gave persuasive opinions (e.g. ‘It is important to dress in a way that shows respect for the company’; ‘People waste money on clothes they don’t really need’). Stronger responses also included topic-specific vocabulary related to fashion (e.g. ‘sustainable’, ‘fast fashion’, ‘trends’).

Weaker candidates tended to give short and undeveloped responses using a limited range of structures and vocabulary.

Speaking Assessment B

Part 1

Interview – Eating out

Stronger responses included specific vocabulary related to gastronomy and dining to discuss where people usually go out for a meal in their local area. Candidates were able to describe a meal they enjoyed using a variety of narrative tenses (e.g. ‘it was my sister’s birthday, so we went’; ‘we ordered ...because...’). Stronger candidates also considered both the ‘why’ and why not’ elements of the third question while weaker candidates only focussed on one element.

Weaker candidates used present tenses for both questions and were limited to simple vocabulary related to food. Weaker responses also tended to begin with shorter answers such as the name of a restaurant or the name of a dish (e.g. ‘I had pizza because I like it’), before being prompted to expand.

Part 2

Short talk – Important people

Stronger candidates came to a final decision at the end of the talk, having first discussed both options. Conditionals and modals were used to good effect as well as discourse markers, e.g. ‘having considered both options’, ‘all in all’, ‘in brief’.

Weaker candidates generally spoke about one of the options only, usually ‘writing about someone you know’, which led them to describe the person and not always discuss what the advantages and disadvantages would be.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates demonstrated a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary to discuss the news (e.g. ‘propaganda’, ‘news outlet’, ‘fake news’), and used both compound and complex sentence structures to develop the discussion. They also included cleft sentences, inversions and prepositional clauses using ‘despite’. Stronger candidates were able to use graded language appropriately with ‘adverb + adjective’ collocations.

Weaker candidates were limited to the present simple tense and first conditional clauses. Vocabulary for weaker candidates tended to be limited to simple adjectives.

Speaking Assessment C

Part 1

Interview – Favourite places

Strong responses to all three questions were relevant and well developed using a range of simple and complex structures with appropriate verb tenses (e.g. 'in my room I can be myself'; 'it's probably the kitchen because I love cooking'; 'if you want to discover new places, then you need to...'). Topic-specific vocabulary was included (e.g. 'spacious room', 'decorations', 'ancient sculpture', 'attend ceremonies', 'create great memories', 'experience something new').

Weaker candidates responded to the second question in the present tense, talking about trips in general, instead of using the past tense to discuss the past and descriptive language to describe the place. Weaker responses were limited to simple structures and vocabulary throughout and although relevant, not always fully developed. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event.

Part 2

Short talk – A family surprise

Stronger responses included a range of simple and complex structures (e.g. conditionals, modals and comparatives) and a wide range of vocabulary to list the advantages and disadvantages of each option. These candidates stated their preferred option and the reason for it. A range of cohesive devices was used to organise ideas clearly (e.g. 'First', 'However', 'Moreover', 'In conclusion'), and there was good use of appropriate collocations (e.g. 'keep the album safe forever'; 'pass it down to descendants'; 'scroll through'; 'to reminisce').

While relevant, weaker responses often dealt with only one of the options and there was a limited range of vocabulary and structures.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger responses were relevant and well developed, and there was a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary. There was also a good range of simple and complex structures (e.g. 'In order to do a great job, you'll have to...'; 'If I were asked, I'd choose a gift'; 'I don't want to be involved in others' problems').

Weaker responses included mainly relevant answers using a limited range of structures and vocabulary, but there was little development. Appropriate use of follow-up questions by the Examiner could encourage a fuller discussion.

Speaking Assessment D

Part 1

Interview – Finding information

Stronger candidates used a wide range of lexical items and grammatical structures (e.g. such as 'answers to questions they find curious', 'to change their lifestyle to a healthy lifestyle', 'because they want to impress teachers'). They also developed responses by linking answers to schoolwork and giving examples, (e.g. 'if I was to do maths and it had trigonometry, I would...'). The internet was most frequently chosen as an option in **Question 3** (e.g. 'books are limited'; 'you can search information faster').

Weaker candidates tended to use present tenses throughout and gave short responses with little expansion. To achieve the highest marks, candidates should give extended reasons for their opinions.

Part 2

Short talk – Friends

Stronger responses included a clear introduction, followed by a discussion of each option, concluding with a stated preference. These candidates used a good range of compound nouns, modals and conditionals (e.g. 'meeting up is time-consuming'). There was also a wide range of topic-specific language (e.g. 'it's more impersonal'; 'requires good internet connectivity').

Weaker responses were limited to simple structures and repetition of vocabulary and there was also difficulty in organising ideas. Weaker candidates focussed only on one option and/or only discussed advantages. To achieve high marks, candidates should use linking devices to improve coherence and organise ideas efficiently, as well as use a wider range of topic-specific vocabulary.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger responses to **Question 1** gave suggestions of when a letter may be a good idea (e.g. 'using a letter can be good for older generation'; 'for sending money'). Stronger candidates used a wide range of vocabulary and structures to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions and to respond at length (e.g. 'different mindset and generation'; 'that's where parents come in handy'; 'parents might not understand the bond').

Weaker responses included relevant answers but used a limited range of structures and vocabulary (e.g. 'if we meet some danger'; 'we can help us') and did not fully develop responses.

Speaking assessment E

Part 1

Interview – Weekends

Strong responses included accurate use of tenses and a wide range of language and vocabulary with clear pronunciation and appropriate intonation. Effective answers were relevant and developed, showcasing a broad vocabulary, including phrasal verbs and collocations.

Weaker responses relied on basic vocabulary and sentence structures, often containing errors in subject/verb agreements and incorrect use of pronouns. Weaker candidates responded to the **Question 2** in the present simple rather than using appropriate past tenses. Pronunciation was sometimes unclear, and intonation was seldom used to express meaning.

To achieve higher marks, candidates should attempt a variety of tenses and more advanced grammatical structures.

Part 2

Short talk – Local history

Strong responses included a range of structures including conditionals and comparatives and topic-specific vocabulary. Stronger candidates were also able to compare both options before stating their preference and giving reasons why.

Weaker candidates found it challenging to speak for the whole two minutes without lengthy pauses or repetition. They also lacked the ideas necessary to consider the two options.

Part 3

Discussion

Strong responses featured a broad vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions and use of diverse sentence structures to address a variety of topics with detailed and relevant answers. More successful responses also

included a range of spoken discourse markers such as ‘that’s an interesting question’, ‘let’s think’, ‘for example’, ‘for me...’, ‘how can I put this...?’, and ‘I suppose...’.

Weaker responses were mainly relevant, but ideas lacked development. They were often brief and lacked detail.

Speaking assessment F

Part 1

Interview – Being famous

Most candidates could relate to the topic and provided interesting answers. Many agreed with **Question 3**, citing social media as the reason. Strong responses used conditionals to speculate on what it would be like to be famous and past tenses to talk about when they saw someone famous. Where candidates had difficulty understanding the question, rephrasing by the Examiner would help. Candidates should also learn phrases such as ‘Can you explain ...?’ ‘What does...mean?’.

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies. Pronunciation was not always clear, and intonation was rarely used to convey intended meaning.

Part 2

Short talk – World Environment Day

Candidates were divided in their preferred choice between endangered animals and animal conservation, or different ways of saving water and energy. Most candidates discussed the advantages and disadvantages rather than how easy or difficult each option would be. Stronger candidates were able to produce topic-related lexis (e.g. ‘conserve energy’, ‘protect the environment’, ‘carbon footprint’) and use a range of structures appropriate for the task: for example, the second conditional, time and relative clauses, comparatives and modals. Stronger responses also included correct intonation patterns and stresses to enhance the performance.

Weaker candidates relied heavily on the vocabulary from the task and focused on only one option which was their preferred choice. They often relied on repetition to speak for the two minutes.

Part 3

Discussion

Most candidates discussed the topic using relevant and appropriate vocabulary. Stronger candidates were able to express more complex opinions using a wider range of vocabulary, developing their answers at length. Most candidates disagreed with the first statement and were able to give reasons why.

Weaker responses included mainly relevant answers using a limited range of structures and vocabulary.

Speaking assessment G

Part 1

Interview – Advertisements

Many candidates referred to social media influencers in their responses. Strong responses produced a range of topic-specific lexis as candidates named a range of places where advertisements are shown, including billboards, social media, magazines, flyers, TV, on the highway and the internet. Stronger candidates were able to show how social media had affected advertising (e.g. ‘advertisements are not posted on walls so much’) and developed communication by giving examples of an advertisement and their reactions to it. They were able to use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures such as conditionals and passive forms (e.g. ‘may be attracted by...’; ‘if you give them enough money, they’ll...’).

Weaker responses were simple and short, discussing advertisements without giving their reaction to them (e.g. ‘I see an advert on the bus’, ‘on the internet’, ‘on TV’) and required encouragement for further

development. Weaker candidates often expressed only basic opinions (e.g. 'Yes, I like the advert with famous influencer...').

Part 2

Short talk – A new skill

The most popular choice was learning a new language. Successful candidates often provided a summary of the talk before giving their personal views about each skill, culminating in an explanation of the reasons for their preferred choice. Comparatives and modal verbs were often used when comparing these two skills (e.g. 'much harder skill to learn', 'might be easier'). Many candidates explained the relaxing benefits of learning to play a musical instrument (e.g. 'can change our brains'; 'it helps you to chill out'), but did not expound on the ease or difficulty of learning the skill.

Weaker candidates focused only on their preferred choice and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of learning the skill. This resulted in much repetition.

Part 3

Discussion

Many candidates described the benefits of talking to a native speaker and/or watching films to help with pronunciation and vocabulary. Other responses included the use of apps, teachers and practising speaking English with their friends. Stronger candidates produced conditionals (e.g. 'If you learn a new language, you are...'). When candidates were able to provide examples for their arguments, this led to greater development, a wider range of vocabulary and a broader range of complex grammatical structures.

Weaker responses included short sentences (e.g. 'Reading books is good') and errors in subject-verb agreement or word forms. They were often undeveloped. Candidates could relate their own experience but were not able to take a broader view and therefore expand their ideas.

Speaking Assessment H

Part 1

Interview – Laughter

Candidates generally responded well to this task. Strong responses addressed all three questions with relevance and depth. They demonstrated a wide range of vocabulary, both simple and complex grammatical structures and accuracy in verb tenses (e.g. 'I find it hilarious when...'; 'that changes if they...'). Pronunciation was clear, and intonation was used effectively to enhance meaning.

Weaker responses were limited to basic vocabulary and simple sentence structures, often with grammatical errors in subject-verb agreement, the omission of articles and an over-reliance on the present tense. Weaker candidates tended to speak more slowly, sometimes resulting in their intonation being less effective at conveying meaning.

Part 2

Short talk – Your school

Strong responses included a range of structures including conditionals and comparatives, incorporating precise topic-specific vocabulary. Stronger candidates discussed the advantages of each option followed by the disadvantages whilst others opted to discuss the advantages of both options followed by the disadvantages, ending by summarising with their preferred option. Both approaches were successful.

Weaker candidates focussed only on their preferred choice, giving reasons based on their own interests. The advantages and disadvantages of their choice, and that of the second option, was rarely a feature.

Part 3

Discussion

Stronger candidates spoke at length, discussing and developing a variety of ideas, facts and opinions whilst incorporating a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures (e.g. 'It wouldn't really be feasible'; 'It would be difficult to find a balance between...'). Stronger candidates also used a variety of comparative structures and emotive lexis to convey opinions (e.g. 'It has a profound impact on one's emotions'; 'Listening to music can release dopamine...').

Weaker responses included relevant but short answers with a limited range of structures and vocabulary. They were often undeveloped. Weaker responses also lifted phrases from the question with no development (e.g. 'Students should decide food in the cafeteria').

Speaking Assessment I

Part 1

Interview – Writing

Strong responses to all three questions included relevant answers with strong details and examples. The most popular answer to **Question 1** was writing a diary. Candidates often elaborated on the benefits of this activity, sometimes using adjectives to describe their feelings. Other areas mentioned were writing short stories or keeping an account of daily spending. When responding to **Question 2**, candidates often decided to build on the answers to **Question 1**, providing more information on the chosen item and explaining what makes the activity enjoyable. Stronger candidates engaged with the topic very well, which was reflected in the varied intonation and selection of vocabulary (e.g. 'it is something magical', 'it inspires me so much', 'it helps me reflect on my life'). All candidates were able to give their view on writing by hand or on a computer.

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies (such as incorrect subject/verb agreement). They often only used the present tense.

Part 2

Short talk – Outdoor learning

Strong responses were well-organised with good signposting used throughout. The most common approach in strong responses was to present the advantages and disadvantages of each option followed by a summary and preference for either a school vegetable garden or camping trip. The most popular choice was the school camping trip, and many candidates highlighted the opportunity to bond and develop a range of skills, ranging from social skills to preparing a meal away from home. Strong responses included comparative forms and conditional sentences (e.g. 'If I were to choose, I would go for...'; 'A school trip would be much more popular with the students'.) There were also some effective topic-specific collocations (e.g. 'promote interaction', 'collaborative work') and idioms (e.g. 'break the ice').

Weaker responses used simple adjectives to describe each option (e.g. 'good', 'nice', 'easy') and simple structures to provide a brief justification of their view. They tended to focus only on the preferred option.

Part 3

Discussion

Strong responses included a wide range of vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions. They employed a variety of grammatical structures and responded relevantly at length. Strong candidates also attempted to widen the focus of the topic (e.g. 'technology is appealing to young people'; 'it is not only smartphones').

Weaker responses were brief, lacked detail and provided basic, surface-level responses.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use a wide range of structures such as modal verbs, conditional sentences and passive voice.

Speaking Assessment J

Part 1

Interview – Competitions

Strong responses to all three questions were detailed and well developed with a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary (e.g. 'enter a competition', 'gain new skills', 'follow the rules'). In addition to a range of simple grammatical structures, more complex structures were also attempted with an emphasis on appropriate verb tenses, particularly when addressing **Question 2**. Pronunciation was clear and intonation used to good effect.

Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with frequent inaccuracies. For example, using the present tense instead of the past or repeating the language used by Examiners from the prompts. Pronunciation was not always clear, and intonation was rarely used to convey intended meaning.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates should ensure they use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event. They should also structure their responses in a clear way and provide examples to support their views.

Part 2

Short talk – A new business

The most popular choice was recycling plastic bottles to make toys. The most successful approach in stronger responses was to develop the talk by stating the advantages and disadvantages each option could potentially bring, often in the order presented on the assessment card. Strong responses included a range of structures. For example, conditional sentences, relative clauses, comparatives with modifiers, topic-specific language (e.g. 'plastic bottles are recycled and utilised in the right way'; 'organising courses to teach older people ... may not bring profits') as well as adjectives to describe both options (e.g. 'time consuming', 'costly'). Some candidates related their personal experience of helping their grandparents use digital devices, which was an effective way of supporting their choice and providing examples. Stronger candidates gave a summary at the end of their short talk, stating their opinion on which option they would prefer and explaining briefly why. They used appropriate signposting language (e.g. 'First I'm going to present both options and talk about their advantages and disadvantages ... then... I will...'; 'In my opinion...'; 'On the other hand...').

Weaker responses tended to focus only on the chosen option, without sufficient justification. This often led to repetition and ideas lacking in focus.

Part 3

Discussion

Strong responses included speaking at length using a variety of lexis and collocations as well as a wide range of grammatical structures to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions (e.g. 'Teaching how to run a business should be a compulsory subject'; 'many young people are likely to end up working for themselves'). Pronunciation was clear and intonation used to convey intended meaning, particularly when more emphatic structures were chosen to give opinion.

Weaker responses included relevant answers with a limited range of structures and vocabulary and repetitive phrases. Weaker candidates tended to give short responses and had to be supported by further questions to say more.

Candidates are encouraged to try to present both sides of an argument, as this will allow them to use a wider range of vocabulary as well as language to evaluate different aspects or options included in the questions.