

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation;
- revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks are deducted for typing errors.

General comments

There was a wide range of varied task setting, some of it carefully linked to candidates' interests and enthusiasms. There was also a wide range of ability in English, from those who used language to think and imagine at a high level to those who were still imperfect in English grammar and aspects of style. Much of the work was typical of good practice in coursework.

For some re-sit candidates the process of completing new tasks ahead of the entry deadline was a hurried one and it was difficult for them to demonstrate a higher standard of achievement from that of the summer session in such a short time. Some of the marks were too generous, both for reading and writing, and the range of marks too narrow. However, teachers worked hard to assess the work, in many cases annotating it effectively, and to complete the necessary forms. There was adequate evidence of internal moderation.

Good practice:

In task setting, good practice was demonstrated when centers set a wide range of tasks for Assignments 1 and 2 in an attempt to meet the interests of as many candidates as possible. It was even better to encourage candidates to choose their own topics and titles in conjunction with their teachers' advice.

It was also good practice to encourage candidates to write from their own experience and to express their own views.

Finally, some candidates were taught how to set out a first draft and to edit and revise (as well as to correct) it. More detail about this is given later in this report.

However, in some cases, where candidates were set a narrow range of tasks, there were those who did not respond well. In addition, some tasks were accompanied by too much teaching, where candidates were advised what to write or how to structure their work. Some stimulus material offered them a pattern to follow in their writing instead of suggesting ways in which they could think imaginatively for themselves to create original and exciting pieces of work.

Too many drafts showed that teachers had corrected specific inaccuracies or made specific suggestions for improvement, instead of giving general advice at the foot of the work. The indicating of errors in the margin or in the body of the work was not allowed because it gave the candidate an unfair opportunity to increase the mark.

Task setting

The setting of appropriate tasks by teachers for Assignment 1 was generally good, except where the topic was factual and academic and where there was no evidence of personal involvement and thought. There was more variety, and fewer candidates lost marks by attempting tasks that gave insufficient challenge.

For Assignment 2, there was a tendency to write stories that contained so much violence that they lost their effectiveness and, ultimately, credibility. This was also true of the large number of haunted house stories. There were some good descriptions of towns and holiday haunts as well as accounts of experiences that stood out in the minds of the candidates.

Assignment 3 was often problematical, and a full account of the work is given below.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

The balance between content/structure on the one hand and style/register/accuracy on the other was not observed. Candidates assessed in Band 1 are expected to demonstrate almost perfect accuracy, and there should only be rare errors in work assessed at the marks of 34 and 35.

Coursework offers excellent opportunities for candidates to draft and to check their work for errors. They have time to proof read their responses and are allowed to use electronic devices to help them with spelling and to identify stylistic shortcomings. Therefore, the expectation is that there should be fewer errors in Coursework.

The aspects of writing that were not always given their proper weighting were:

- **Punctuation, especially sentence separation:**
candidates tended to link sentences with commas rather than with conjunctions, for example: '*The next day the mist had vanished, I had breakfast and set off for the bus station.*' Some candidates used far too many semi colons, many of them inappropriately, and also confused colons with semi colons. In some pieces of work exclamation marks were used where there were no exclamations and this was sometimes true of question marks.
- **Sentence structure:**
this was connected with incorrect sentence separation. Some candidates wrote simple sentences throughout an assignment and punctuated them correctly. Others did the same but used very little punctuation. At a higher level there was sometimes little variety in sentence types and lengths. Some candidates wrote excessively long and poorly organised sentences that convoluted meaning and failed to communicate ideas clearly.
- **The range of vocabulary:**
some candidates had a limited range of language, which resulted in the repetition of key words and difficulties in expressing exact or subtle thoughts and ideas. Where language was very limited, even where it was correctly used, the mark was typically in Band 4. Some candidates used over-elaborate language so that meaning was sometimes difficult to follow, or where words were used inaccurately.

Some candidates had problems with spelling. Moderators have always been instructed to allow either UK or US spelling but to demand that it should be consistent. There were also many examples of candidates misusing the spell check. Not only was the spelling of some words not known, but when given alternatives, some candidates made the wrong choices.

Examples were:

Components for opponents; par annoyer for paranoia; revelling and reviling for 'revealing clothing'; *Students feel self-contours; heading towards familiar tertiary; Friday 8th December 2010 hornets me till this day.*

These are examples of words that should have been proof read. Proof reading was not always carried out and accounted for many errors.

Some centers did not indicate or annotate every error within a portfolio, and this can lead to an over-estimation of the level of competency in written accuracy.

The marking of content and structure was much more accurate except where the content of Assignment 1 was not demanding enough. The assessment of register was also good. Many candidates were able to write in three distinct registers.

Assessment of reading

This tended to be lenient and will be dealt with later in the report. Candidates were given high marks even when they had not selected relevant ideas and opinions from the text or had not evaluated them in any depth.

Administration by Centers

Moderators complimented Centers on their filling in of forms and presentation of the folders. Most Centers enclosed the CASF (WMS) form and indicated which of their candidates were included in the sample. The CASF was required for all entered candidates, and all changes to the marks at internal moderation should have been shown in the right hand column. This was not always the case and Moderators had to search for evidence of moderation in the folders themselves.

There were few examples where the text(s) used for Assignment 3 was missing from the folders. It was useful for each candidate to have a copy which showed which parts had been selected for evaluation in the response.

One draft per folder was almost always enclosed. It was not necessary for there to be a draft of all three assignments.

The general standard of annotation was high except that it was rare for all errors to be indicated, and some scripts bore no such indication at all. There were some Centers that did not annotate their work so that it was impossible for the Moderator to understand how marks had been awarded.

Folders were very well presented, but Centers are asked to ensure that the work is firmly fixed together. Folders are frequently moderated more than once and are handled by several people, so that loose papers may easily go missing. Centers are asked not to enclose folders in plastic covers because of the extra time required to handle the work.

Drafts

Some candidates used their drafts well, revising sections and editing language. The following procedure was looked for by Moderators:

- The draft is produced. This may be partially completed, a set of ideas that may be changed radically at the next draft, or a completed version.
- The teacher reads the draft and writes general advice about editing, revising, and correcting at the foot of the work. There should be no marks in the margin or the body of the work.
- The candidate uses a different colour to indicate what changes are needed, either altering wording or stating what is intended in the final version that is different from the draft.

It was not acceptable that first final versions were exact copies of the first draft with no indication of advice or changes to be made.

Internal moderation

Centers are reminded that the function of internal moderation is to bring the work of different sets into line with each other. Enough folders from each set need to be scrutinised to ensure that it has as a whole, or in part, not been leniently or severely marked. The marks of the set should be scaled accordingly so that the rank order of all candidates in the Center is sound.

There were some cases of disagreement with rank order, but these were not too great for moderation to take place without changing the Center rank order.

Assignment 1

This assignment was well done. There was a general understanding that there needed to be evidence of a personal viewpoint or experience. Most responses were argumentative and were well structured. Where they were not, paragraphs appeared to be placed randomly with little thought for how a reader would progress through the assignment.

Tasks that were not successful included rants on topics such as cyclists in lycra and public buses. These lacked challenge and there were structural problems and some inconsistent register. There were a number of film reviews that contained too much retelling of plot and which followed an unstructured template. There were a very large number of tasks set on video games, mobile phones, Facebook, and technology in general. These essays were remarkably similar in their argument and mostly lacked any personal input. The topics were not bad, but they needed a lot more thought about how to present content in an interesting way. Leaflets were rarely successful as examples of writing, although attractive to look at.

The great variety of interesting tasks included the following:

My ideal education

How to apply makeup

Scouting

Should students grade teachers?

Corruption, mother of all crime

Yorkshire terriers

Misconceptions of Islam

A guide to surviving Hogwarts

Prison reform (a fine piece, worthy of a prime minister's attention)

A speech about freedom

Assignment 2

These assignments were either descriptive (particularly of places that were home or which had been visited), narrative, or accounts of personal experience. Topics for personal experience were nearly all engaging either because they were unusual or because they were so vivid in the writer's memory. The descriptions were also realistic and nearly always worked well for the candidates who chose them.

Narratives varied. Many of them were so-called 'Gothic' stories, and some were 'dystopian'. The latter varied from the imaginative and clever to the frankly silly, with hordes of zombies wreaking vengeance on lonely survivors. The secret of this type of narrative is to make it credible, and the only way to do this is to proceed with caution, carefully building up atmosphere until the reader believes in what is being related. The problem was that the events of the haunted house stories, the 9/11 tragedy and the plane crashes were outside the experience of the writers. Most of the stories were not credible and it took a really good writer to make them work. It was a pleasure to find those that were based on knowledge of what happens in a good short story, and there certainly were some examples.

For the same reason, the stories that contained gruesome violence did not work because the violence took over from the story as a whole. The story became an excuse for describing flowing blood whereas the description of the blood should have served the needs of the story. Whether it was safe to encourage young writers to create such violent stories is another matter.

Monologues rarely worked because they tended to be expressions of emotion that repeated itself, so that the content was limited and there was no clear structure. As usual, those that did work were very good.

The following is a selection of topics that elicited good writing:

The bell boy

Silent desert

The monster under my bed

The jump

Before the big game starts

Elephant ride

My first tattoo

City at night

Arrival in Manila.

The descriptive topics, *the beach*, *the fairground*, *the storm* and *the park*, have now been popular for a very long time and centers may find candidates produce better work with alternative titles.

Despite these problems, the writing of the second assignment was often good. Candidates attempted to demonstrate a range of vocabulary and there was often a strong sense of relevant detail.

Assignment 3

There were several problems with this assignment. The choice of text was not always successful because there were not enough ideas and opinions with which candidates could engage. It was quite common for candidates to mistake the text for a stimulus instead of a text set for reading study. As a result, many responses were to the topic rather than to the text. This did not affect the writing mark which was separate from the reading, but it did affect the reading mark where marks of 8, 9, and 10 were given too readily. There was a lack of selection of ideas and opinions from the text and some of the comments were very straightforward and not true evaluations. Those Centers that understood the nature of the task did noticeably well, as follows:

- The text (about one to one and a half sides long) consisted of a writer putting a case for a controversial topic, with which the candidates could agree (partly or completely) or disagree.
- The response started with an overview. This could include elements of summary, particularly making clear the writer's attitude and stating the reasons for agreeing or disagreeing. This overview could be extended perhaps to half a side.
- The response then picked out a series of ideas and opinions from the text that supported points made in the overview. Each of these was evaluated as an argument. The candidates might define fact from opinion, explore the consistency of the argument, or give reasons why the writer was being biased. It was not enough to agree or disagree without reasons. It was wrong to attack the writer instead of examining and destroying the arguments.

Very good candidates were able to write an overview and then produce a coherent response which assimilated quotations both short and long from the text to create a strong argument. In these responses the evaluation often came first and was supported by the quotation.

Some Centers used texts by Katie Hopkins. While these were appropriate, the arguments used in the articles were often rather unchallenging and they tempted candidates to respond with personal attacks instead of patiently demolishing the attitudes that were expressed. Articles by Jeremy Clarkson were more difficult because he tempted the reader to disagree violently. However, his comments were not as superficial as they first appeared and needed taking apart with considerable care.

The best topics were those that were within the sphere of candidates' experience and included:

Should school start earlier in the day?

A world without work

Syrian refugees

A teenager writing in favour of school uniform

An attack on teenagers' behaviour and attitudes

Teenage sleep patterns

An article proposing to ban the hijab

Using ex-army soldiers as teachers

Left to die on Everest

Article about closing a local youth center.

Final comments

The Moderators thank Centers for the efforts they made to complete what were often very worthwhile and readable folders.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

- It is important for a centre to choose **either** Component 5 or 6 **before** planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. Component 5 is a test taken within a specified window, being suitable for centres who wish to assess their candidates on one topic, on one chosen date. Component 6 is more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the speaking and listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Having chosen Component 6, centres should pay close attention to both the current syllabus and Speaking and Listening Handbook to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. In particular, the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out these sections themselves but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given. **Specific** information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide **four different items** in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered, a **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge and the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- It would be appreciated if centres would use **digital recording equipment** to generate audio files, which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format. This allows for easier access for moderators when playing the recordings back. Appropriate file types are mp3, wav and wma but not AUP as moderators struggle to open these using standard computer software. Please **check the quality** of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.
- It would be very helpful if for each candidate a **separate track** is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.
- The teacher/Examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if **candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing** before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.
- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** if the activity is very short. It is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents. It is worth noting that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged.

Comments on specific tasks

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances, where spontaneity is missing, often do not meet the requirements of the top band.

Task 1

Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. More successful centres allowed candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made.

*Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:*

- A significant moment in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Why I love anime
- My participation in ...
- My favourite band
- Being a teenager in the twenty-first century

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football' remains a popular topic amongst boys but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence of the higher order thinking skills expected for those wishing to attain a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions. Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

*Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:*

- Planning a school celebration
- Arguing for and against the use of social media
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- The effects of Body Image
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion
- Acting as employers choosing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. To this end, it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- A trial scene based on a literary text, e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- A Jeremy Kyle style role play possibly with literary figures as the central characters
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity

General conclusions

The general standard of assessment by centres is at the correct level. Generally, centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and in the choice of topics. Candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities continue to be enthusiastic about the experience and clearly benefit from careful planning and practise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- Candidates should take careful note of the line numbers stated in the questions to ensure that their answers are taken from the appropriate section of the passage.
- For **Question 1 f(i)** (and equivalent questions in future papers) candidates should note that they should give a synonym that relates to the underlined word only and not to the whole phrase. When responding to **1 f(ii)** they should comment on the whole phrase and not just repeat the answer given to **1 f(i)**.
- **Question 2 Reading.** Candidates are expected to develop the third bullet in some detail and not just mention it in one sentence at the end of their account. It is also important to understand the third bullet point is intended to assess how well the inferences of the passage have been understood and that a successful response to this bullet should go beyond the explicit story but remain true to the original's content, genre and register.
- **Question 2 Writing.** When proof reading their responses, candidates should focus on consistency of tenses and sentence separation (comma splicing).

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded well to the subject matter of the reading passages. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. **Question 1(f)**, as with similar questions in previous sessions, proved the most difficult although there was evidence of a generally improved performance in responses to **f(i)**. **Question 1 f(ii)** was less well answered and candidates are reminded that it is important when answering this question to relate their comments specifically to the terms of the rubric – in this instance they were asked to comment on how the language used by the writer conveyed the difficulty of driving down the mountain road. In some cases, candidates gave lengthy explanations in **f(i)** that would have been more appropriate to **f(ii)**.

There were a large number of atmospheric and imaginative narratives in response to **Question 2**. Many of these, however, despite containing convincing and detailed developments of the first two bullet points, ended somewhat anticlimactically as they failed to develop the reason for the appearance of Richard's friend Geoffrey or of the help he needed, or simply ended at the same point as the original passage and, consequently, denied themselves the chance of gaining a Reading mark that was higher than low Band 2.

Passage B proved to be accessible for nearly all candidates and the standard of responses to both parts of **Question 3** was of a high level with much evidence of confident summary writing techniques.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) **Using your own words, give two reasons why the narrator decides to drive carefully (paragraph one, 'For a little time...').**

Most candidates gained at least one mark on this question with the most common answer referring to the fact that the road contained many twists or curves. A large number of candidates went on to gain the second mark by explaining that the narrator's view of the road was made more difficult by the snow. In the passage the writer used the phrase 'the snow was confusing to the eyes' and it was necessary to make the point that the 'confusion' was about seeing clearly. Some candidates simply put that the snow was confusing or that the snow made driving difficult and these comments were not sufficient to gain the second mark. The majority of candidates took the information for their answer from the relevant section of the passage

- (b) **Which one word in line 7 suggests the narrator wants to drive more quickly?**

Most candidates answered this question correctly and wrote the word 'restlessness' which was all that was required to gain the mark available.

- (c) (i) **Using your own words, give two details that make driving easier for the narrator (lines 14 – 16).**

It is important to make the general point that **Question 1(c)** (both parts) and **Question 1(d)** cover a similar section of the passage and that each question requires slightly different material in response – hence the need for careful and accurate reading is essential here. The key to answering **(c)(i)** is that it is looking at the changes in the conditions through which the narrator is travelling and not about his feelings. A large proportion of the candidates identified this and most gained at least one mark. This was gained by commenting that the road was now straight (allowing him to accelerate). The other mark was gained by commenting on the change in the weather. However, candidates who put only that the weather 'changed' did not explain it sufficiently to obtain the mark – it was necessary to explain that the weather improved or that the sky was now clearer or the climate was fresher.

- (ii) **State two ways in which the narrator's feelings change (lines 16 – 22).**

Many candidates successfully answered this question and gained both available marks. The most popular explanation, and the one that tended to appear in answers that gained only one mark, was that the narrator was more positive or less anxious. The second point was gained by those who went on to give more detail – either that the sight of the new conditions was wonderful or that he felt a sense of victory having got this far (and now thought that he might survive). The emphasis in contrast to **(c)(ii)**, as noted above, is different – here it is upon the feelings of the narrator rather than the external conditions.

- (d) **Using your own words, explain what the narrator means by '...and surely, in this clean air, my fears that had arisen in the night would be defeated' (line 21 – 22).**

The more successful responses to this question focussed upon the effect upon the narrator of reaching a better place, and of how fears that might be magnified in the dark could seem less threatening in the day time. It is important for candidates to read the questions very carefully in order to be aware of subtle differences between one question and another. The key to a question of this kind is to respond to the language and for the candidate to do this in their own words. Some candidates found difficulty in finding synonyms and gave explanations that repeated the use of words like 'fears', 'night' and 'defeated' without indicating the candidate clearly understood the meaning of those words.

(e) **Give two details that the narrator suggests led to his crash (paragraph five, 'I had grown...').**

The great majority of candidates gained two marks for this question. There were various details that were relevant to a successful response – that the narrator had grown careless; that he wasn't looking at the road (but at his friend's house); that he didn't see the landslide (and/or didn't brake) until it was too late, or that he swerved too far to avoid the obstacle. Those candidates who failed to obtain either one or both marks did so because they wrote about what happened after these contributory factors – hence the need to read carefully and note the words 'led to' in the question.

(f) (i) **Re-read paragraph two ('In spite of my...I ever spent'). Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in three of the following phrases:**

There were many candidates who gained three marks for this part of the question by giving a brief explanation, or a synonym, for the underlined word in the phrase taken from the passage. However, there were some candidates who attempted to relate the word to the driving conditions and giving answers that were more relevant to part (ii) of the questions. It is worth emphasising that the key to success in this type of question is in giving a synonym or short phrase that explains the underlined word and to keep the focus just on that word.

(a) **'skidded and side-slipped' (line 9)**

Answer: sliding or moving from one side to another (or from left to right).

Many responses gained a mark here with the most popular explanations being 'took over' and 'overwhelmed'.

(b) **'grazed the edge of the gorge.' (line 10)**

Answer: just touching

The key to gaining the mark here was in the explanation of just touching. It was not enough to put 'touching' as the implication was of being very close to something.

(c) **'it was far more exasperating' (line 10)**

Answer: annoying or frustrating

Many candidates were able to explain the word, although one error was where candidates suggested 'exhausting' which was more appropriate to (d).

(d) 'the weariest hours I ever spent' (line 13)

Answer: most tiring

Many candidates understood that this meant 'tiring' but some did not qualify the extent of that feeling. Some put 'worst' but no more which was too general as a response to this word.

(ii) Explain how the writer conveys the difficulty of driving down the mountain road through the use of language in each of the phrases you have chosen in Question 1(f)(i).

It is important that candidates do not merely repeat their answer from (f)(i) and that they also refer to the whole 'phrase' and relate it to the question focus which in this case is the difficulty of the driving conditions. Some candidates merely attempted to paraphrase the selected quotation, which tended to result in partial lifting, rather than comment on the effect of the language employed by the writer. Some candidates did lose marks by not identifying the 'phrase' which had been selected, as it was not always clear which one had been chosen. This lack of identification was also to be found in (f)(i) but less frequently.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator in Passage A. When you return home you are interviewed by a local radio station about your experiences on the journey to help your friend.

Write the words of the interview.

In your interview you are asked the following three questions only:

- What was particularly difficult about your journey through the mountains?
- Can you explain how the car crash happened?
- What did you do to help your friend?

Begin your answer with the first question: Interviewer: Can you tell us....

Virtually every candidate followed the instruction to write the words of an interview and managed to establish an appropriate register. Even where candidates did not use the three questions as part of their answer there was still an effort to respond to each of the three bullet points and to include relevant material. Almost all candidates made relevant responses to the first two bullet points, many finding their own means of expressing the key features rather than merely repeating detail from the passage. The most successful responses showed an awareness that the friend's problems had not occurred immediately before the narrator's arrival, but had required him to drive through the night to offer help. They also gave convincing and credible explanations of the problems and the help that the narrator was able to offer. A few responses spent far too long on the journey and the crash at the expense of the third bullet.

Most responses clearly expressed the writer's feelings about his situation and about the difficulties experienced. There were convincing accounts of driving in bad weather, on a winding and narrow road and of the relief of reaching a better climate and a better road. There were also candidates who addressed the third bullet with very moving accounts of the importance of friendship and the sacrifices that it required when help was needed. Successful responses also developed the third bullet by including a wife for the friend – sometimes this involved difficulties experienced with childbirth. Candidates who successfully developed this third bullet point also showed awareness that emergency services might not have easy access in such a remote area while the narrator had at least some previous familiarity with the conditions and the roads in the area.

Most candidates gave their accounts in the chronological order of the passage and the bullet points may have assisted with the sequencing of the responses. It is worth re-emphasising to candidates that their responses should develop from the original passage but also be rooted firmly in it. Awareness of this was shown particularly well by candidates who recognised the hints that the friend's problems had started sometime in the past and where they were aware that there was need to explain why they had contacted the narrator rather than the rescue services. It should be remembered that developing the material which is there is key for the Reading mark for this question, as opposed to writing an imaginative piece which bears little or no relation to the original.

In general, candidates seemed to engage well with the passage, although some of the less successful responses had very abrupt endings or made only limited attempts to go any further than the ending of the original passage. More successful responses gave a balanced response, ensuring as much attention was paid to the last bullet as the first two

Question 3

- (a) **What do you learn about the characteristics of hurricanes and how to protect yourself against them, according to Passage B?**

A very large number of candidates scored marks of 8 or above with very few scoring below 6 and many scoring all 10 marks. A small number of candidates did not follow the instruction to write one point per line and some just wrote lifted sections from the passage on each line hoping that within those sections they would gain marks by inclusion. There was a good range of detail for candidates to identify, however, trying to cram too much information into each line in the answer space does seem to lead to repetition or to perfectly valid points not being credited.

- (b) **Summary**

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the characteristics of hurricanes and how to protect yourself against them.

The key to a successful summary is a combination of the use of own words where appropriate, conciseness, and if possible, synthesis. Many candidates were able to answer this question with some degree of conciseness and many also tried hard to use own words although at times, this attempt led to a lack of concision with unnecessary personal commentary or linking phrases. The most successful responses managed to synthesise points related to related aspects of the passage such as the power of winds and their destructiveness and connecting points about rain, flooding and high waves. Generally speaking, the majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the importance of selecting relevant information and presenting it concisely.

Only a small number of responses were of excessive length and a similarly small number were very short. Nearly all responses were well focused on the topic. The most successful were well organised and fluently written. Most candidates understood the requirements of the writing section, but there were some list-like responses.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
Reading Passage (Core)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages thoroughly, and considered the questions carefully
- planned the content, structure and sequence of their response before writing
- adapted their writing style to suit the task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- avoided repetition
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3(b)** and when exploring and explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were fully developed in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked and edited their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate, precise vocabulary.

General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper generally indicated familiarity with the demands of each task and the need to select and use relevant material from the passages to answer the questions. Most candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most responses were an appropriate length. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and the majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed.

Most **Question 1** responses were focused on the question and in the main all parts of the task were attempted. **Good** responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were often developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail to draw conclusions about the events leading up to the marooning incident, Selkirk's survival on the island, and the degree of blame that could be apportioned to the various protagonists. Less good responses tended to describe the events of the incident and the survival techniques, but were unable to use the information to develop points. Some of the least successful responses displayed little modification of the material and/or lost sight of the task in hand. Candidates are reminded that lifting or copying from the text, even of relatively short phrases, can be an indicator of less secure skills and understanding, and should be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates needed to make specific, detailed comments about their choices from the two paragraphs. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and consider the connotations and associations of the language used. Most responses included at least some attempt to explain appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Fewer answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the higher bands. Many contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that 'the mountain darkened' means that it is getting dark on the mountain, or that 'a croak, a howl' means that a frog is croaking or a wolf is howling. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, giving instead rather broad and vague comments such as 'this shows that he feels afraid or trapped' and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to achieve over half the marks available by finding a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)**, though some did to good effect. In **Question 3(a)** short notes, identifying each separate idea precisely, are required, rather than whole sentences or imprecise selections from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** own words need to be used and some responses missed opportunities to target higher bands by relying on lifted phrases from the passage to communicate ideas. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task, otherwise it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original and limits the evidence of their own writing skills. It is not a requirement that every word is altered – more technical terms or names for example are unlikely to have suitably precise synonyms, and words such as ‘recycled’ and ‘steel’ did not need to be replaced or explained. Some candidates attempted to write a persuasive piece rather than the required informative response, often including unnecessary comment and additional information, and prejudicing their ability to summarise the key aspects of the passage effectively as a result.

Although Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression. While writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or limited style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are a newspaper reporter. Following Selkirk’s rescue from the island, you investigate the events surrounding his abandonment and the sinking of the ship. You interview Stradling, Selkirk and other surviving members of the crew, in order to write a newspaper report.

Write your newspaper report.

In your newspaper report you should:

- **describe the events leading to Selkirk being left alone on the island and the ship setting sail**
- **explain how Selkirk managed to survive for so long alone and how his feelings changed**
- **suggest how far those involved in the events could be blamed.**

Begin your newspaper report with this headline: Castaway found alive!

The majority of candidates read the question carefully and engaged with the task of writing a newspaper report on the events surrounding Selkirk’s abandonment and the sinking of the ship. Responses written in the wrong format were relatively rare, though some did struggle to recreate the voice of a news report. A few candidates confused the characters of Selkirk and Stradling. A small number paid insufficient attention to the passage introduction, which provided the historical context as 1703, and described Selkirk’s rescue by helicopter for example. Others reproduced the introduction to the passage verbatim.

In relation to bullet one, most candidates were able to select details such as ‘pirate’, ‘a remote island’ and ‘the ship was infested with woodworm’. Some missed out on searching for treasure as a talking point. A few candidates did not appear to know what pirates were, which made the passage difficult. A lack of understanding regarding ‘mutiny’ resulted in the phrase ‘Stradling accused him of mutiny’ being lifted. An equally troublesome phrase for some was ‘Selkirk responded with fists and rage’, as candidates did not see this as a physical altercation.

The second bullet provided many candidates with an opportunity to offer some straightforward ideas, though some candidates focused on Selkirk’s initial feelings when the ship left, rather than focusing on the question which was to explain how his feelings changed. Many students spent a long time detailing the first night or week of Selkirk’s abandonment and his fear, including the conditions on the island and the weather, and subsequently spending little time on how he manages to survive. Often there was too much reliance on the original words, such as ‘he lumbered over the stones’, ‘all courage left him’, ‘he stayed by the shore, scanning the horizon’ or terrors of the night. Frequently, candidates chose to lift the phrase ‘he resolved to build a dwelling and gather stores’. There was also frequent lifting with ‘activity dispelled depression’ and ‘he chose a glade in the mountains a mile from the bay’. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to

develop and interpret the material, replaying the passage, albeit in their own words, and often producing uneven responses. A mechanical use of the passage demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding – those displaying a competent or thorough reading of the passage were able to go further, adapting and modifying the material in the passages.

The more straightforward elements of the first two bullets were generally treated equally, but the rigour of apportioning blame beyond basics proved more difficult for some candidates in relation to bullet three. Many were only able to give simple statements as to who was responsible. Better answers went on to develop the reasons and explain why. A number did not refer to the sinking of the ship, therefore missing opportunities to incorporate details from the passage as evidence of their Reading skills. There was some misreading regarding Selkirk deliberately having sabotaged the ship, or Selkirk being rescued at the same time as the sinking of the ship, which was only a month later, even though Selkirk is described as spending months on the island.

Good responses focused on all three bullet points and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task. The best contained a range of ideas that were developed and closely related to the passage, and a good range of integrated detail. Some less successful responses relied on working back through the passage repeating and replaying events and limiting their focus on the task. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that rather than returning to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing, some candidates had attempted to write a more general newspaper report from what they remembered of the passage. The least successful answers were often very thin, simple or short. They offered at best a very general view of the situation with few ideas or details in response to the bullet points.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response. The majority of candidates showed at least some familiarity with the required form of a newspaper report and many made some effort to address their audience and purpose, sequencing ideas and structuring their response helpfully. In some less successful responses, an awareness of audience was prejudiced by weaknesses in expression arising from a restricted range of secure vocabulary and/or grammatical errors such as mistakes with tense/agreement affecting meaning. Occasionally, in otherwise stronger responses, awkward expression and/or weaknesses in structure detracted from the overall effect. Most candidates chose to follow the order of the bullets to structure their response, though needed if doing so to guard against the danger of repetition – for example, where ideas could be used in relation to more than one bullet. Efficient planning allowed the strongest answers to address this and consider at the same time how to present the angle of their report from the start – some had clearly decided in advance of writing who was to blame and set out to prove it from the beginning of the piece. Lapses into narrative, often relating extended conversation as part of an interview, indicated an inconsistency of style in less assured responses, whilst copying directly from the text was often the most frequent feature of the weakest writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the whole passage carefully, including any information given in the introduction
- pay equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- maintain attention to the audience, form and purpose of the response throughout your answer
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- do not copy from the passage
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- develop and extend your ideas by considering the perspective of the given persona at the time of writing
- answer clearly, in your own words, creating a suitable voice and tone for the persona of your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) **Selkirk's surroundings and how they make him feel in paragraph 4, beginning 'All courage left him...'**
- (b) **The island at night in paragraph 5, beginning 'The sun dipped down...'**

Select four words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Likewise, brief notes jotted under each choice are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language being discussed. Answers which made no attempt to discuss or explain choices and consequently offered little or no evidence of understanding were rare, though a few offered only a little relevant comment and a number repeated the language of the passage or task. Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently precise and extended to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were imaginative and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, considered the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain how the infiniteness of the sea represents Selkirk's isolation or how the night-time manifestations mock Selkirk's fear of the night. A few candidates picked up on Selkirk's romanticised view of the sea and his sense of helplessness without his ship. Many candidates were secure on meanings and could explain words such as 'billowing sail', 'hostile presence', and 'surged'. Some effects were explained well; many candidates could comment on the destructive power of the wind as it 'swished and crashed'.

The best responses considered meaning and effects throughout the response. The weakest responses had very few language choices, or offered few explanations beyond the very general. They sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach by identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves and limited the response. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example that Selkirk was afraid in **part (b)**. Less successful responses sometimes attempted a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, offering only slight evidence of understanding as a result. Some candidates offered single word choices only, and did not always select the most appropriate words for discussion, for example, offering 'moon' rather than exploring and explaining the image of how the 'moon cut a path'. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices or simply lifted whole sections of the paragraph and offered a generalised assertion related to fear or loneliness. These responses sometimes offered insufficient evidence of understanding for band 5.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader – the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to Passage B, why are ships broken up, and what makes the process so dangerous?

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from Question 3(a) to write a summary of why ships are broken up and what makes the process so dangerous, according to Passage B.

To answer **Question 3** successfully, candidates needed to first identify 15 points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them clearly, one numbered per line in note form in the grid for **part (a)**. Candidates can only be credited with a maximum of one point per line and any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. Most candidates understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purposes' they should not go beyond line 15, or include groups of ideas on each line. Most responses were able to identify between 5 and 10 relevant points; relatively few offered more than 10 rewardable points. The second part of the task requires candidates to use their notes, adapting and organising them to write a summary in their own words. There were very few cases of wholesale copying in **part (b)**.

The question had two strands: why ships are broken up *and* what makes the process so dangerous, and the best responses organised their points to clearly acknowledge these two aspects. Weaker, less-focused responses, did not fully address the task. A number relied on working through the passage in **part (b)** – often with limited modification of the original – repeating ideas and/or offering incomplete ideas as a result. Others simply transferred their answers from **part (a)** still in the words of the passage, using (sometimes inappropriate) connecting phrases. Better responses were careful to be precise and unambiguous in the ideas they presented – for example, being clear that it is old or ageing ships that are expensive to maintain, as opposed to any ships.

Where candidates had not engaged fully with the task and/or attempted a more mechanical approach, paraphrasing the material, repetitions were common – for example, repeating the dangers of 'explosions' and 'fires'. Similarly, mechanical answers often missed over-arching ideas – for example, missing the danger of a (range of) serious injuries and consequently offering "scars", 'missing fingers' and 'blindness' as separate points. Where candidates had not focused precisely on the text, they often presented incomplete or inexact ideas – for example, the danger of workers falling needed to include a sense of height. Where points were imprecise and/or unclear in **part (a)** they could not be credited. One word answers such as 'toxic materials' were insufficient to communicate an understanding that the ships were constructed using these, rather than simply containing them.

There are no marks to be scored for Writing in **3(a)**, however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless errors. Candidates should pay particular attention, for example, to correct any slips that might change meaning; for example, some candidates wrote that less than 90% of the ship's materials are recycled, whereas it is described as being 'more than' in the passage.

Question 3(b) responses that did well had used their points from **3(a)** carefully – organising them purposefully into a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on repeating points in the order or language of the passage. There was some suggestion that answers at the top end had revisited points in **3(a)** during the planning stages of **3(b)** in order to edit and refine points in this part of the question – leading to clearer more distinct points in **3(a)** and an efficient and well-focused response in **3(b)**.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the task and underline key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify precisely relevant content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in **3(b)** to re-organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and do not comment on the content or style of the passage
- do not add details or examples to the content of the passage

- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3a**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.