

**Oral Exam**

Candidates who achieved an 'A' assessment were able to handle complex ideas well and to present clear, fluent and coherent opinions, using a broad range of vocabulary and structures. There was a high level of accuracy (not necessarily error free) and contributions to the conversation were spontaneous and natural. These candidates enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their folio topics in some depth.

Candidates assessed as 'B' displayed a good range of vocabulary and sentence structures and had a reasonable level of accuracy. Pronunciation was clear and intonation appropriate although the ability to speak fluently on more complex ideas issues was somewhat limited.

'C' candidates were able to present simple ideas and opinions and, if they had prepared their folios thoroughly, this supported them through the conversation. The range of vocabulary tended to be limited and grammatical errors were frequent. Although they were able to communicate adequately, they were limited in their interaction.

In the case of those who did not pass, it was clear they had difficulty in presenting even simple ideas. They were often incoherent, with irrelevant and/or repetitive responses. The production of language was hesitant, with many grammatical errors and a narrow vocabulary.

All candidates should be reminded that responses of only a few words are inadequate for an oral examination and that responses such as 'I have no idea' or 'I don't know' are inappropriate.

Reading and Responding

The two texts, a personal narrative and an objective research report, were stylistically very different, giving candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the breadth of their comprehension abilities.

In the first passage, a number of candidates misread the family situation and assumed that the parents were separated or divorced and that these visits were the only times Nicole saw her father. There was also some misunderstanding of Nicole's attitude to the visits, arising from the phrase 'a slight feeling of fatigue and boredom'.

Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully, for example they were asked to describe her experiences 'on the train' but a number included information from the whole paragraph, rather than confining themselves to what happened on the train. The question about why Nicole liked Penny highlighted those candidates who simply copied a phrase from the text. Their answer, 'she let me sample a few', showed no understanding of the word 'sample' nor did they make it clear what it was Nicole sampled.

Some questions did ask candidates to reply in their own words, but it would be preferable to have this as a general instruction for all answers, rather than confining it to specific questions. For example, for the first question as to why the office is in a good location, the better candidates gave synonyms for the word 'sprint', demonstrating a deeper understanding, while the weaker candidates simply copied the phrase, 'he could sprint, if necessary'. Candidates who copy words and phrases directly from the texts end up with the same assessment as those candidates who demonstrate a better understanding through using their own words.

The questions for the second text were a good test of the candidates' understanding. Some had difficulty working out the correct response to question (c) about how many more hours of sleep teenagers need than they get (4 hours). The answers to the final question, asking them to give evidence to support the statement, 'This text is a report', were interesting and most candidates had a clear understanding of what constitutes a report. The sub-heading, 'A report by Joyce Frieden' was quoted as evidence by many candidates; but fortunately they went on to give further evidence as well.

Writing in English

In general the narrative essays were handled the best, with candidates using the structure and features of this genre skilfully, producing some dramatic and entertaining stories. Candidates, who tackled the reflective topic, did so with great honesty, clearly writing from the heart and drawing on real life experiences.

The comparative and discussion essays were tackled by at least a quarter of the candidates. Whilst many did have some strong arguments and valid points of view to offer, a lack of language proficiency prevented them from conveying these ideas adequately. There was a recurrence of very basic grammatical errors and a weakness of structure at all levels: sentence, paragraph and whole text.

The majority of the candidates were able to structure their writing and write to the minimum length, although some candidates exceeded the word limit and wrote essays of over 450 words, sacrificing quality for quantity. There were also cases of essays that were pre-learned and unsuccessfully adapted to the topic. Many candidates either ignored the genre headings completely or missed the key words in topics, for example, 'changed your life', or 'an evening in your home' (not at the beach).

Candidates who achieved the A and B ratings were better able to express ideas clearly and concisely, using more varied and accurate structures and a richer vocabulary. In addition, they were able to link language to purpose and to address the topic in an interesting way, producing writing that was fluent, though not necessarily error-free.

Texts

Once again, the colour reproductions were greatly appreciated, making the task more realistic for the candidates and giving them the opportunity to comment on an essential aspect of these texts.

Overall, most candidates were well prepared for this task, although there are some who do not have a good understanding of persuasive texts and who do not have the necessary language to discuss them.

The film poster was handled quite competently, with most candidates able to select the features of the text that showed it was an advertisement for a film. The second question, asking about the target audience, was also well handled, with candidates mentioning a range of different groups and giving evidence to support their answers.

Of the three texts, the one that posed the greatest difficulty was the advertisement for the deodorant. It is interesting to note that most of the A candidates did not choose this as one of their texts. Candidates were able to answer the first question correctly, but the next two questions posed more difficulties. The second question was not clear, as it needed the word 'written' inserted before 'text'. Many candidates merely commented on the pictures without showing the links to the words, or vice versa. In the third question they were not able to determine the point of view put forward by the text. Instead, they commented that it was the bride's point of view, confusing 'what' with 'whose'.

The third text, the advertisement for the car, was also well done, apart from the second question, in which some candidates neglected to give reasons, as asked, and therefore could not gain full marks. In discussing the effectiveness of the text, candidates were able to display their sound understanding of how texts are constructed to appeal to particular audiences.

Some candidates wrote on all three texts, rather than following instructions and selecting only two. In these cases the markers assessed the first two responses.

Listening Comprehension

This year's texts were of a manageable length and level of difficulty and most candidates coped well, providing answers that showed a good understanding of the passages. Although the passages were very different in style, there did seem to be an overall focus on health and medicine.

The first passage was more difficult, particularly the question asking them to put information into columns. Some candidates put the information into the wrong column, either through confusion or possibly a misunderstanding of the meanings of 'advantages' and 'disadvantages'.

There were also candidates who made up information or who wanted to give their own opinions on the topic; for example, the possibility of getting hepatitis was mentioned as a disadvantage of swimming while disadvantages of cycling were that you could get run over and that it is expensive to buy a bike.

Other words and phrases that caused difficulties were 'Fat Loss Centre' ('fat low centre', 'fatal centre'), 'use energy' ('lose energy'), 'involves more muscles' ('warm muscles').

The second passage did not produce any major problems for the candidates. Among errors were 'fecal examination' for 'physical examination' and difficulty with the phrase 'six-floor building' ('64 buildings'). A number of candidates said the narrator's friends were 'remazed' when she told them about her day.

In the listening, it is not necessary for candidates to put vocabulary into their own words, although some managed to do this very well. One candidate said the narrator was scared when she saw the blood gushing into the 'tool', rather than the 'needle'.

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