

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/11
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Exercises 1 – 4**, it is suggested that candidates underline or highlight the central focus of each question, in order to ensure that each part of the question is addressed and to avoid including incorrect details which could affect the mark awarded.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should ensure that no incorrect information is included with a correct response. They should focus on providing a precise response, and excess details should not be included.
- In **Exercise 2**, candidates should consider the message of each paragraph, since identifying the correct answer often involves following discourse markers in consecutive sentences in the paragraph as a whole, rather than simply recognising a single key word or synonym. In this series, many candidates appeared to have difficulty with questions testing implied meaning.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates should ensure that notes are given under the correct heading. Notes should be brief, only providing key details.
- 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 develop their response as fully as possible, ensuring they fulfil the requirements of the task. For **Exercise 5**, all three bullet points must be addressed in order for candidates to access higher marks. This series, 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-learned expressions than in previous series. In addition, there was far less evidence of inappropriate and outdated idioms. For **Exercise 6**, if candidates use the ideas in the prompts, in order to gain higher marks, they should further extend and develop these ideas or introduce separate ideas of their own.

General comments

Confident attempts were made on all exercises.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

This exercise was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates.

Question 1

This was reasonably well attempted although some candidates incorrectly selected the distractor, ‘1939’. Most recognised the correlation between ‘created’ in the text and ‘invented’ in the question.

Question 2

This was very well answered, and most candidates identified the link between ‘I’d choose’ in the text and ‘prefer’ in the question and correctly selected ‘fantasy’ as their response. Very occasionally, some candidates responded with ‘science fiction’, which was the distractor.

Question 3

This question proved to be more challenging. Many responses omitted the key word ‘World’ from the title ‘World Cosplay Summit’. This was not precise enough and did not convey the global impact of the competition which made it different from the ‘EuroCosplay’ or ‘Nordic Cosplay’ events.

Question 4

This was very well attempted. Very occasionally, candidates answered ‘old man with a beard’ but most identified the correlation between ‘role’ in the text and ‘type of character’ in the question.

Question 5

Candidates were required to read the whole paragraph to identify the correct detail. Some candidates incorrectly selected ‘selling cosplay costumes’ from the first sentence of the paragraph, but this referred to ‘lots of people’ and not specifically to Lana. Successful candidates understood the message in the paragraph as a whole and were credited with the correct response ‘taking photographs’.

Question 6

Most candidates were successful in recognising all the correct details and gained all marks. All four options on the mark scheme were used. A mark could not be given if the comparative ‘*more*’ in point three was omitted.

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

Exercise 2

Question 7

A wide range of marks was awarded on this exercise. Candidates were most successful with **Questions (b)** and **(d)**, with many also credited with correct answers for **(a)**, **(c)**, **(e)** and **(h)**. **Questions (f)**, **(g)** and **(i)** were less successfully answered.

In **Question (f)**, candidates needed to match the statement ‘which person says that they will go wild swimming whatever the weather’ with the detail in text D ‘it does not matter how cold or wet it is – I’ll turn up’. The most common incorrect answer was B, where candidates possibly linked the statement with the detail ‘you’ll find me out there most times of the year, sometimes even in the winter months’. However, this was qualified by the detail in the previous sentence ‘it’s only when it’s too windy that I’ll accept that it’s not wise to swim in the sea’. The key wording in the statement was ‘whatever the weather’ and only text D precisely conveyed this.

In **Question (g)**, the statement asked, ‘which person suggests that a memory of wild swimming might have been inaccurate’. The correct match was with text C and the observation ‘what I had to be reminded of was my concern at the time about what creatures might have been in the deep water beneath me’. Although Lana now has no fears about what may be in the sea, she had forgotten how worried she was when she went wild swimming for the first time. Many candidates may have selected statement A because of the wording ‘I clearly remembered the freezing temperature of the water which certainly is not the impression given by the images’. Candidates may have connected ‘memory’ in the statement with ‘remembered’ in the text but, on this occasion, the link was not accurate. The key word in the statement was the introductory ‘suggests’ and the wording in text C, with its idea of having an inaccurate recall of an event, was closer to this idea than the more definite, clear remembrance in text A.

In **Question (i)**, candidates needed to match the statement ‘which person suggests that they have done something risky when wild swimming’ with the sentence in text D ‘There have been some occasions when I have been the only one there.... though I’m well aware that’s not a good idea’. Many candidates incorrectly selected text C, where Lana was concerned about the creatures in the sea. Again, the key word in the

statement was 'suggests' and so candidates needed to look for details in the text which were implied rather than factual.

Exercise 3

This exercise was successfully answered by the majority of candidates. Many were able to demonstrate enough understanding of the text to score very well here, providing brief responses in note form.

Question 8

The full range of possible correct answers was chosen by candidates and many managed to convey four of them correctly. Points 1 and 2 on the mark scheme were particularly well attempted with brief notes and the need for a suitable verb in point 1 was well recognised. For point 3, some responses could not be credited as the answer was incomplete: 'charging drivers'. This required the detail 'to enter parts of the city' in order to precisely follow the meaning in the text. Similarly, in point 5 'parking charges' on its own was insufficient without the key idea of 'outside the workplace'. Point 4 was selected less often and, on occasion, responses omitted the key word 'better' and could not be credited because 'public transport' on its own did not convey any idea of improvement. There were very few occasions this series where candidates unnecessarily used their own words.

Question 9

This question was very well attempted, and many candidates were awarded the maximum three marks. All four options on the mark scheme were identified. Each note required a verb following on from the wording in the heading except for the first option 'travel plan' in point 3. Candidates successfully used the verbs 'renting', 'sharing' and 'downloading' in points 1, 2 and 4 respectively as per the text. On occasion, in point 4, responses such as, 'using a mobile phone', was not precise enough to convey the specific idea of downloading an app and could not be credited.

Exercise 4

Many candidates were awarded maximum marks and most scored at least three out of a possible five. Candidates were most successful with **Questions 11, 12 and 15** and least successful at answering **Questions 10, 13 and 14**.

Question 10

The correct answer to this question was found in paragraph one. The key word 'suggests' in the question stem indicates it is targeting implied information or an opinion rather than factual detail. Option C was incorrect because the text refers to the child Serena as, 'simply part of a group of children' rather than the 'only participant'. The text conveys the writer's opinion that there is 'nothing wrong with her' and she is 'perfectly ordinary-looking', but the key expression 'apart from' would suggest that the cap with wires that Serena is wearing would be the most interesting feature for the writer.

Question 13

The correct answer to this question was found in paragraph four. Candidates needed to read the text carefully to select the correct order in which Serena undertakes her house-building task. The key word in the question is 'begins' indicating that the first stage of the process had to be identified. In the first line of the paragraph, the text states that the building materials, the plastic blocks, have already been chosen by the researchers, so option C is incorrect. The key to the correct response is in the second sentence 'She is shown a recording' demonstrating how to access the building blocks and 'then use them to build a house'. The sequence of events is reinforced by the single word 'then' which makes it clear that watching the video was Serena's first task.

Question 14

This question was answered less successfully. Candidates needed to focus on the key word 'research' in the question which emphasised the aims of the psychologists over a longer period rather than the activities of just one particular session that the writer is observing. Serena 'clearly has a sense of imagination' (line 6) but this is the writer's impression of watching only one task. Similarly, Serena 'is told to copy what she has observed and she does just that' which demonstrates that she is able to remember details, but this is also on

just one occasion. The main part of the research is to observe how, over a period of time, a child's ability to follow instructions is more developed in six-year-olds than three-year-olds 'who are much less able to understand a complex set of commands'. The final sentence clarifies this idea stating, 'it is this ability that the study is focused on....'.

Exercise 5

Question 16

Most candidates engaged successfully with the task and many responses were well developed with an appropriately informal tone. Overall, responses tended to address all three bullet points in the task. The most successful responses contained a detailed description of the sports event, together with a plausible reason why they wanted to help at the event and a full explanation of what they will be doing there.

For the first bullet point, well developed responses described the time and location of the event as well as mentioning their own interest in the chosen sport. The most successful responses included comparisons with similar events from previous years. There were explanations why the event is taking place, quite often because the local community has decided to come together to support good causes. There were also examples of fund raising for the homeless or for local hospitals. Several stars from the world of sport were also mentioned as attending the event as special guests. Some also made predictions for the success of the event.

Less successful responses tended to list the various sports that were being played at the event with no additional detail. Others tended to select a sport or a competition that they were familiar with and describe the format and rules of the event with little else: 'This event is primarily for football. There will be many teams. The winners will go to the next stage until the final'.

For the second bullet point, the most successful responses offered practical reasons for their decision coupled with a sense of eagerness to help which reinforced their desire to take part. Many stated that volunteering at the event would qualify them for a certificate and improve their chances of being accepted into a college of their choice. Others were persuaded to help out either by their teacher: 'I was not really keen on participating at the start but our teacher said whoever helps will get a slight boost in their grade', or by their parents, who were so pleased that they promised to excuse their offspring from chores around the home. Some candidates were motivated by the chance to get their favourite player's autograph or by the fact that they were being paid for their role. Less successful responses lacked development and tended to provide only minimal details about the chance to help out, with the only reason being that the sport had always been their favourite and that they were good at it.

For the final bullet point, several responses emphasised that they would be taking part since they had been training for the event, whilst others had offered to be the coach and help younger participants. Some chose to be involved with the event as a referee since they had a thorough knowledge of the rules. Most successful responses added to the basic description of their role with opinions and thoughts which greatly enhanced the sense of purpose and audience: 'I'm going to the event as a referee, my only job will be to make sure that the teams play fair, so it would not be too draining or at least I hope not! Still, I will have to stand under the hot sun for hours'.

From a language point of view, the most effective responses often referred to the recipient of the email and were written as if to a real friend, with expressions such as: 'You know how much I admire him' or 'I think it's a pretty cool job, do not you?' or 'Guess what – you would not believe what is taking place!'. Less successful responses tended to use overly formal language for the email with expressions such as 'I would like to inform you' and 'first and foremost' which would be better placed in Exercise 6. There were many examples of ambitious language and more complex structures, for example: 'I will check to see if anyone is cheating, doing underhand moves...' and 'We are encouraging our generation to think big and to follow in her footsteps'.

Language slips were largely as a result of the misuse of verbs, especially in the mixing of past and present tenses. There was also a large number of responses which confused the use of 'take place' and 'take part'. For example: 'I really wanted to take place in this event' and 'The race will take part in the large park in our town'.

Spelling accuracy was generally good, even when more ambitious language and structures were used. Although many candidates produced 'price' for 'prize', 'where' for 'were' and 'exited' for 'excited'.

Most responses showed effective organisation and sequencing. However some responses did feature very short simple sentences with no attempt at the use of clauses or connectives.

Exercise 6

Question 17

Overall, this task was attempted well. Most candidates wrote a clear, developed, appropriate response, which successfully fulfilled the requirements of the task. Most responses featured a suitably formal tone and register for this final exercise.

Many responses described the magazine as suitable for teenagers with content related to their school subjects: 'The reason this magazine appealed to me was because it was all about science and technology, which have always been my favourite subjects' and 'It presents interesting topics that teenagers have to learn at school and therefore it might help them in their studies'. Some responses linked the magazine content to a favourite hobby or activity and so were able to include a description of the articles in it with confidence due to their prior knowledge of the subject matter. Such responses included fashion, 'top ten trending shoes of the decade', films, sports and famous celebrities as well as tips on how to succeed at school and advice on relationships. For example, 'I really liked the way that the articles talked about teenagers' problems, which are often ignored'.

Successful responses included a wider review which included balanced comments on both the good and bad qualities of the publication: 'It could be just a publishing mistake, in which case, the editor-in-chief needs to get better at his job'.

Less successful responses spent too long describing the story line of an individual article and offered little in the way of opinion. Alternatively, they tended to over-emphasise input from their friends 'some of my friends said this...others said that...' and omitted their own views. In some instances, this amounted to a copying of the four prompts with little development and no personal viewpoint, which affected the marks awarded.

Less successful responses closely followed the prompts and offered little additional comment other than quoting a price, which varied considerably between 2 and 50 euros or dollars. There was some misinterpretation of the requirement to select and review one specific magazine. Several responses included information about magazines generally and what they can offer as alternative entertainment to teenagers alongside mobile phones and the plethora of TV channels, which did not fulfill the task entirely.

From a language point of view, the most successful responses used ambitious and complex structures to express their ideas and opinions, for example, 'not every teenager has this length of attention span', 'the magazine has the potential to become a staple for teenagers' and 'I was sceptical on first read'. There were also many examples of less common vocabulary such as, 'unanimous success', 'thought-provoking' and 'eye-catching'. Some other examples of suitable language for the task type included: 'It's not an exaggeration to say...', 'what stands out for me' and 'my biggest criticism would be...'.

Cohesive words and expressions such as 'it's worth noting that', 'the overall impression', 'in a nutshell', 'having said that' and 'the alternative view is' were seen to be used appropriately.

Overall, most candidates responded with a well-organised and sequenced response which covered both a brief outline of the content of the magazine, and a more detailed review of its specific qualities. Less successful responses tended to cover the storyline only. To gain access to higher marks for Content, a review format requires the writer to express their own views as well as give factual information. Generally, a good balance was established by providing an introductory comment on the aim of the review and a concluding statement; both of which helped to give a sense of cohesion. Responses which had access to marks in the higher level were able to provide a different form of words in the concluding paragraph to that used in the main body of the review and avoided repetition of the same vocabulary and expressions.

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General Comments

Confident attempts were made on all exercises.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

This exercise was well attempted by the majority of candidates. It is important that each question is carefully read in order to identify the targeted details and to avoid the distracting textual information.

Question 1

This question was quite well answered. The most common incorrect responses were ‘the hard protective shell’ and ‘its back is often green in colour’. Such responses indicated that candidates may not have read beyond this information or understood the information following it.

Question 2

This question was fairly well answered. A significant number of responses indicated that closer reading of the question was required.

Question 3

This question was generally well answered. Some responses included incorrect information such as 'close to the surface', which affected the mark given. Some candidates did not seem to understand the semantics of the text and gave 'close to the surface, or 'holding their breath' as the response, which suggests they misunderstood 'This avoids the need for them to stay close to the surfaceand allows them to remain hidden among rocks'.

Question 4

This question was generally well answered. 'A male is larger than a female' was the most common incorrect response. Such a response indicated that candidates may not have noted what followed in the text, 'It (the male) has a longer tail ...and it is this feature which is used to identify the gender'. Candidates should look for this kind of referencing in a text and be able to recognise determiners and relative pronouns which guide them to the correct response.

Question 5

Generally, candidates dealt well with this question.

Question 6

This question required candidates to identify three points out of a possible four which could be found at any point in the text, and there were many confident attempts. Some incorrect responses such as 'stay close to the surface' or 'make their way down to the beach' either referred to something that was a merely potential danger, or that did not provide the key element of a correct response. Occasionally, the animal that was a threat to the turtles was not clearly specified or incorrect as in 'animals attack them', 'sharks attack them', or 'tigers and sharks attack them'. A small number of candidates wrote 'hold breath', possibly wrongly assuming that this was something the turtles should not do.

Exercise 2

Question 7

Many candidates responded well to this matching exercise, and most gained at least four of the nine marks available. There were candidates who provided nine correct responses. Generally, **Questions (f), (g) and (h)** proved the most challenging. **Question (d)** was answered most successfully. A few candidates left some or all of the questions either unanswered or answered randomly, e.g., the same response for each one.

Candidates needed to ensure that information in the section of text selected fully supported their choice of answer, while looking for the rephrasing of the ideas, rather than the same words or phrases in the question and text.

- (a) This question was generally well answered. Candidates needed to identify someone who felt reading poets from their own age group inspired them. This was expressed in Text D as 'Amazingly, I've actually started writing poetry...thanks...to... seeing writers that are no older than me.' Quite a large number of candidates gave Text B, possibly because the text states, 'I was expecting to see far more work by poets of the same age as me'. C was another commonly chosen incorrect answer, perhaps because of the phrase 'a poetry loving sixteen year old like me.'
- (b) This question was correctly answered by the majority of candidates. The correct response was Text C, as Daiyu referred to a lot of poems that 'deal with environmental issues' when he would have preferred 'a little more variety.' Text B was the most common incorrect response.
- (c) This question was well answered. Text A was the most commonly chosen incorrect response, possibly due to the statement: 'although I was unfamiliar with many of the poets...'
- (d) This question was very well answered. Very few candidates were unable to identify the correct response.
- (e) This question was well answered. Candidates needed to find the person who found it hard to understand many of the poems. This was located in Text B, as Eduardo 'was never really sure

what they were trying to say'. The most common incorrect response was Text A, possibly due to a misreading of 'is beyond our experience and understanding' but referring to the poetry studied at school, not that in Voices, which was 'a delightful surprise'.

(f) This question was reasonably well answered. It required candidates to link the statement, 'It's my guess that whoever put this collection together' in one sentence with 'I could have come up with a more appropriate set of poems' in the next. Text B was the most common incorrect response. This contained a more general criticism of the contents of the book but did state, 'I know too little about poetry to claim that any selection I could come up with would be any better.', which was distracting information.

(g) This question was quite well answered. Most candidates correctly chose Text B, linking the meaning of 'too many poems by one particular poet' in the question with 'One poet especially... should have had far fewer poems in the collection' in the text. Text C was the most common incorrect response, and some candidates may have been distracted by 'There are more poems by Olivia Infanta... than any other poet'.

(h) A significant number of candidates were unsuccessful here. They were asked to find someone who was pleased that there were few very long poems. This was expressed in text A as '*Once a poem goes beyond a page length, I lose interest so seeing only one or two examples ... was a great relief*'. Text D was the most common incorrect response, perhaps due to the reference to '*...quite lengthy ones*', although this person adds, '*...that were especially enjoyable*', which rules it out.

(i) This question was very well answered. Candidates needed to select the review which stated that the design on the front of the book will appeal to teenagers. Almost all candidates correctly chose Text C, which has the relevant key information in the first two lines, '*I suspect that most adults will object to the cover of Voices... It's supposed to attract teenagers, though, which I think it does highly effectively*'. Incorrect responses were evenly split between B and D.

Exercise 3

Candidates performed very well in this note-taking exercise, with many candidates 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.

Question 8

This question was very well attempted, and many candidates correctly provided four clear notes from the possible five options. A few candidates omitted key information as in 'low costs' when it was the construction costs that were low, and this aspect had to be communicated. Similarly, 'lack of noise' could not be credited as it was lack of *background* noise that was a benefit. Incorrect responses included 'vary in their design' and 'large amount of living space' which although being positive characteristics of underground homes, are not mentioned specifically as benefits which make them popular in the text.

Question 9

This question was very well attempted, and the majority of candidates identified three correct responses out of a possible four. Candidates generally included key details from the notes. Sometimes a note was attempted, but key information was omitted as in 'plants and trees on top'. This response failed to communicate a disadvantage and needed to convey the idea that damage was caused by roots. Some candidates appeared to assume that negatives featured in the text were disadvantages. As a result, they wrote notes such as 'lack of background noise' or 'heat cannot easily escape' under this heading.

Exercise 4

Some candidates provided all six correct responses and most candidates gained at least 3 of the 6 marks available. **Questions 12, 13 and 14** were the least successfully attempted. Some candidates opted to write the same letter, e.g., A, in answer to all six questions.

Question 10

This question was generally well answered by the majority of candidates. The most common incorrect answer was Option A, 'depend on how you're feeling'. Candidates may have been distracted by 'you don't want to hurt the person's feelings', in the text. A much smaller proportion of candidates chose Option B, 'prove easy for most people', although in fact the text suggests it can be difficult to know what to say.

Question 11

This question was quite well answered. Option B was the most selected incorrect response. Fewer candidates incorrectly chose Option C, 'teachers say that feedback can improve performance'. This was an example of a situation in which we are often unwilling to provide feedback but was not linked to 'this' in the question.

Question 12

This question was fairly well answered. This paragraph reported on research results into feedback and the only supported option is B: 'people have a strong desire to get feedback'. The text states 'a large majority of them (participants) were extremely eager to receive it (feedback) ...receivers generally described feedback as extremely valuable'. The most common incorrect choice was Option A, while some candidates chose C, which is the opposite of what is said in the text.

Question 13

Many candidates correctly selected Option B. Option A was the most common incorrect answer. It seems that candidates did not focus on 'little account was taken' and focused instead on 'the effects that differences in the relationships between the people involved could have'. Candidates who incorrectly chose Option C may not have recognised the negative idea expressed in 'the study also failed to consider how often feedback is given'.

Question 14

This question was fairly well answered. Candidates had to find the section of paragraph 5 concerning what feedback in schools should do. The correct option was C. Although the notions of high-level and general feedback (option A) and encouraging a student (option B) are both mentioned in the text, the text does not state these are what feedback should be or do.

Question 15

This question was very well answered. Candidates had to consider the final paragraph and decide what advice the writer offers about providing feedback. This is option B, which is supported by 'we should ...be cautious about immediately telling someone what they've got wrong and how they can improve...asking someone if they would like your feedback would be a better start'. The most common incorrect response was Option C.

Exercise 5

Question 16

Overall, most responses were communicated clearly, using a range of language and a consistently appropriate style and register. A range of linking words and cohesive devices was used which were generally suitable for the task. Most candidates successfully addressed all three bullet points and a high proportion of responses achieved high marks for both Content and Language. However, some responses were less than 85 words, which significantly impacted the marks available.

School subjects, sports and learning strategies were the most common courses mentioned. Some less common ones included mental health and character building. A variety of plausible reasons was given for attending the course. Responses recommended how the course could be better by mentioning short hours, lack of space or discipline, or the need to purchase better equipment. Candidates who had chosen to place the whole course in the future rather than 'recently attended' as in the rubric, had to be more creative when suggesting improvements. Many were able to do this as they wrote about the price of the course or something else that they had seen during the advertising of the course that they already knew they would like to change.

Candidates were generally able to use suitable informal register, opening with phrases such as, 'How have you been doing?', 'How are things going?' and 'Sorry I haven't written for a while'. Some candidates expanded on why they had not been in touch for a while by writing it had been 'pretty hectic' and they had had 'exams going on' and were able to refer to things they had in common, such as shared friends or experiences. Common phrases to close the email were, 'You should give it a try!', and 'Got to cut this short now'. All of this resulted in an appropriate style and related well to the target audience.

Most candidates attempted a range of language. More successful responses featured accurate sentences of varying lengths, with more complex structures and a range of appropriately used, less common vocabulary such as, 'Here's the scoop'; 'we delved into topics such as'; 'It fostered a lively atmosphere'; 'it piqued my interest.' Many candidates used phrasal verbs correctly and appropriately as in 'I thought I'd put it to good use' and 'I signed up for'. Some candidates succeeded in incorporating less high frequency expressions into

their emails such as, 'It was worth every penny', 'it was swings & roundabouts', 'I'd be back in a flash' and 'I was on cloud nine'.

Many responses featured a wide range of simple and complex structures with a high level of accuracy e.g., 'With the fast pace of the course, some were forced to learn more quickly than normal, and hence I think that having more instructors would have been better for everyone' and 'I would love to tell you about my unique experience where I was able to join a course which taught the basics of how to use a first aid kit.' Some candidates demonstrated a range of simple structures and attempted to use complex structures, with generally good accuracy, for example, 'But after reflection, this weekend course were a very good opportunity for me to improve my math level, but also as a way to make some new friends.' Modal verbs were generally used accurately as in, 'I wish I could've stayed longer'.

The most common grammatical inaccuracies occurred with past participles, e.g., 'This course was holded,' and 'I choosed to do an art course'; a lack of agreement with singular/plural nouns; a lack of control of tenses and slips in adjective/noun collocations.

Exercise 6

Question 17

Overall, this task was attempted well. Most candidates wrote a clear, developed, appropriate article, which successfully fulfilled the task. The majority used all the given prompts, developing them successfully with many introducing their own ideas. However, some responses adhered closely to the wording of the prompts, using basic linking devices to connect them, which meant the response contained very little of their own ideas and language. Several candidates introduced an extra level of detail when developing their response, often allowing them to demonstrate a sense of pride in where they lived. More successful responses featured candidates' own ideas either alongside or instead of the given prompts and developed their ideas very well with a good level of detail. Most candidates presented their readers with a balanced article looking at both the positive and negative aspects of their town, although higher marks could also be achieved by focusing on just one of these aspects.

The positive features of the town often included a description of how good the town was for keeping healthy. Candidates wrote about parks and sports centres catering for teenagers' physical health, while cafés, restaurants, virtual reality cafés and places in the malls and green spaces enabled them to meet up and make friends. Other ideas included writing about the importance of education over the availability of age-appropriate entertainment, and candidates wrote about the good schools and libraries that were present in their town. Many responses were able to put the negative aspects of living in the town into perspective. For many, their main concerns appeared to be around personal safety and security.

The full range of marks was awarded for language. A number of candidates clearly attempted to employ a wide range of complex structures and more less common vocabulary. Some responses demonstrated a high level of accuracy with only occasional errors, enabling candidates access to marks in the top level. Their writing included accurate, varied sentence structures, appropriate punctuation and organisation, along with less common vocabulary. This level of language is exemplified in, 'It is a fact that our town has undoubtedly become a home to various events and activities, such as sports festivals, which are quite enjoyable for teenagers. Moreover, multinational companies have opened shopping centres and fast-food chains which nowadays appeal to many teens.' Some responses featured generally simple structures with frequent errors, which did impede communication. Examples included, 'Sometimes it is awkward as teenagers have different entertainment, so it is not perfect as well as the expenses.'. Other responses attempted more complex language which included non-impeding errors such as, 'Another problem is the places that has facility can be used by teenagers are too limited.'

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/21

Listening

Question Number	Key
1	A
2	C
3	C
4	B
5	D
6	C
7	D
8	A
9	C
10	B

Question Number	Key
11	B
12	C
13	A
14	A
15	C
16	B
17	A
18	B
19	C
20	A

Question Number	Key
21	B
22	A
23	C
24	B
25	A
26	C
27	G
28	A
29	F
30	B

Question Number	Key
31	C
32	H
33	C
34	B
35	B
36	A
37	C
38	A
39	C
40	B

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.

General comments

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

Candidates listened to 5 exercises which consisted of monologues (e.g., a voicemail message, 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., the weather forecast, a type of TV programme, a trip destination) to listening for more complex ideas (e.g., opinions, attitudes, reasons, personal preference, and experiences) and understanding the connections between these ideas (e.g., mutual decisions and agreements). The script for each question also contained distracting information, in addition to the targeted key idea, in order to test candidates' ability.

On the whole, there was a greater level of success with items that focused on identifying specific information which was stated rather than implied. Only about half of all candidates successfully answered items which

focused on more complex ideas, such as speakers' opinions, and items in which key information was implied rather than directly stated.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

In this part of the test, candidates listened to 8 short recordings on familiar topics and selected one visual from four options. On the whole, candidates performed extremely well, particularly in **Questions 5–7**. Candidates were slightly less successful with **Questions 2–4**. There was no clear pattern in the incorrect responses. However, **option A** was occasionally given in error for **Question 2**. Less successful candidates may have selected this option as the word 'drink' is heard three times in the recording.

Exercise 2

In this part of the test, candidates answered two multiple-choice questions per recording. There was a relatively high level of success for this exercise, especially in Questions which took the form of a dialogue.

Candidates were particularly successful with **Questions 9** and **10**. **Questions 13–16** and **18** also produced a fairly high level of success. These questions mostly targeted speaker's opinions and reasons. Candidates tended to be less successful with questions which took the form of longer monologues and where the targeted idea was implied rather than directly stated. This was particularly the case in **Question 17**. The question targets how the speaker feels about having to change the arrangements. The correct response is option **A** – '*embarrassed about her reason for doing it*', which equates to the implied idea '*I can't believe I overlooked that – so silly of me!*' in the text. Many candidates instead selected the distracting details in options **B** and **C**.

Other questions that produced a slightly lower level of success included **Questions 11** and **12**. In **Question 11** candidates may have incorrectly linked the idea '*I was worried one would be late*' in the recording with the idea of '*It was full of delays.*' in option **C**. In **Question 12** option **B** was sometimes selected in error.

Exercise 3

This part of the test required candidates to follow a longer talk about a city park. Candidates had to complete each of the 8 statements with one of the three multiple-choice options. On the whole, candidates dealt reasonably well with most of the questions in this exercise.

Questions 25 and 26 were attempted very well by the vast majority of candidates. **Questions 20, 21 and 24** were also fairly well attempted by many. Overall, there was not the same level of success for **Questions 19, 22 and 23**. **Question 19** targeted an activity the speaker was interested in as a child. The correct response was option **C** '*reading about science*', but many wrongly selected option **A**, '*writing poems*', possibly having been tempted by the word spot on *poems*. In **Question 22**, candidates were required to select the correct type of events that are now *organised* for local people in the park. The correct answer was '*educational events*' in option **A**. Many candidates appeared to have been tempted by '*social events*' in option **B**, which local people can do if they choose to in the park, but are activities which are not organised for them: '*They can ... chat to neighbours*'. **Question 23** targeted an environmental aspect that the speaker is focusing on at the moment. The correct response was '*maintaining water levels*' in option **C**. However, option **A**, '*monitoring bird populations*', was often given in error. Candidates were probably distracted by this idea because of the speaker's factual claim: '*the lakes there attract birds*'.

Exercise 4

In this multiple-matching part of the test, candidates were required to match statements that expressed ideas, such as intentions, opinions, consequences, feelings/reactions and personal experiences, to the correct speaker. Candidates are required to choose 6 correct statements from a list of 8.

While the majority of candidates selected the correct ideas for speakers 4–6 (**Questions 30–32**), only about two thirds provided the correct ideas for speakers 1–3 (**Questions 27–29**).

There was no clear pattern of incorrect statements for **Questions 28** and **30–32**. Candidates sometimes provided statement **D** '*I was thrilled to be close to a famous musician.*', in error, for **Questions 27** and **29**. In

both questions, the speaker talks about being close to the stage but do not mention the feeling of being thrilled by the proximity – which is the detail that candidates may have missed when choosing this statement as their response. Candidates should be reminded that all the details from a statement must be expressed by a speaker for the statement to be the correct response.

Exercise 5

In this part of the test, candidates were required to listen to a semi-formal interview with a man who recently went on a river boat trip and answer 8 multiple-choice questions. Overall, there was a mixed level of success for this exercise and many candidates found this part of the test relatively challenging.

While **Question 33** was answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates, **Questions 37 and 38** produced a fairly low level of success. Candidates attempted **Questions 34–36** and **39–40** fairly well. In **Question 34** option **C** was sometimes selected in error. In **Question 36** some candidates tended to select the distracting detail in option **B**. Those who selected this option may have missed the fact that the question targets something that the speaker did with the rest of the group. However, the activity of looking for the source of the river in option **B** was only done by the speaker, but not the rest of the group. **Question 37** proved relatively challenging for many candidates, who tended to select mostly option **A** as their response. The question targets what surprised Harry once on the river. Less successful candidates may have been distracted by the phrase 'see for miles' and wrongly matched it to '*how remote some parts of it were*' in option **A**. **Question 38** was the most challenging question in this part of the test, probably because the speaker only implies his reaction rather than stating it directly. The question targeted the speaker's reaction to when the group was forced to leave the river and walk through a town. The correct idea was that he found the contrast difficult to handle – given in option **A** and expressed by '*That was weird – it was so noisy, and very different from what we'd left*'. Only about half of all candidates provided the correct response. Those who lost marks often provided option **C** as their response, but there were also a fair number of candidates who wrongly selected option **B**.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/22
Listening

Question Number	Key
1	A
2	D
3	B
4	A
5	C
6	D
7	C
8	B
9	A
10	A

Question Number	Key
11	B
12	A
13	C
14	B
15	A
16	B
17	C
18	B
19	B
20	C

Question Number	Key
21	C
22	B
23	B
24	A
25	B
26	C
27	G
28	C
29	F
30	E

Question Number	Key
31	B
32	H
33	C
34	B
35	C
36	A
37	B
38	C
39	B
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.

General comments

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

Candidates listened to 5 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, a means of transport) to listening for more complex ideas (e.g., opinions, attitudes, reasons, personal preference, and experiences) 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, in order to test candidates' ability.

On the whole, there was a greater level of success with items that focused on identifying specific information which was stated rather than implied. Only about half of all candidates successfully answered items which focused on more complex ideas, such as speakers' opinions, and items in which key information was implied rather than directly stated.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

In this part of the test, candidates listened to 8 short recordings on familiar topics and selected one visual from four options. On the whole, candidates performed reasonably well in most questions in this set with **Questions 5 and 8** being answered most successfully suggesting good understanding of future suggestions and intentions.

Candidates were least successful with **Questions 4 and 6**. In **Question 4**, option **C** was frequently given in error. Candidates were most likely tempted by the phrase 'high grades' in the recording. In **Question 6**, many candidates may have incorrectly selected option **B** as they possibly misunderstood the time reference 'the day after'.

Many candidates in **Question 3** gave option **C** as their response instead of option **B**. They may have been tempted by the word spot on the verb 'do' used in the question (i.e., 'do this evening') and in the recording ('do my homework').

Exercise 2

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

Candidates were particularly successful with **Questions 11 and 17**, and **Questions 10, 12 and 16** also produced a fairly high level of success. These questions mostly targeted speaker's opinions and preferences.

Overall, candidates tended to be less successful with questions which took the form of monologues. This was particularly the case in **Question 14** which proved to be the most challenging item in this set. Many candidates selected option **C** instead of option **B**, because they may have missed the referencing word 'then' referring back to 'after lunch', which was expressed in option **B** as 'tomorrow afternoon'. Candidates were also less successful with **Question 9 and 18**. In **Question 9**, option **B** was often given in error with many candidates most likely tempted by the phrase 'went on for at least' and the time references in the recording (i.e., 'after about five minutes, and went on for at least another five after the display had finished'). In **Question 18**, option **A** was often selected instead of option **B**. Many candidates were possibly distracted by the speaker saying '...used for music classes and all sorts of other things' and mostly likely did not consider this idea in its entirety '...rather than being a hall that's used for music classes and all sorts of other things'.

Exercise 3

This part of the test required candidates to follow a longer talk about a survey that the speaker had organised. Candidates had to complete each of the 8 statements with one of the three multiple-choice options. This part of the test was dealt with reasonably well, with most of the questions in this exercise.

Candidates were most successful with **Questions 21 and 25**. Many candidates also performed well in **Questions 19, 20 and 23**. However, in **Question 23**, candidates sometimes selected option **A** 'social media' instead of option **B** 'posting leaflets'. The speaker mentions both as the two ways they used to attract volunteers, but candidates had to listen on to be able to determine which way was more effective and to select the correct detail – something that some less successful candidates probably did not do.

Overall, there was not the same level of success for **Question 24 and 26** where many selected option **B** and option **A** respectively. **Question 22** proved the most challenging. The question targets an activity that took the most time at the first planning meeting. Option **A** 'choosing how to record results' was often given in error here. Many candidates possibly only focused on the verb 'record' used in the recording as well as in option **A** rather than listening carefully to the whole idea in the recording.

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 the speakers' exercise routines and included, for example, personal preferences, previous experiences, opinions and explanations. Candidates had to choose 6 correct statements from a list of 8. Many found this exercise challenging and there was a mixed level of success. While the majority of candidates selected the correct ideas for speakers 1 and 5 (**Questions 27 and 31**), only about half of all candidates provided the correct ideas for speakers 3 and 6 (**Questions 29 and 32**).

There was no clear pattern of incorrect responses for **Questions 28 and 30–32**. Less successful candidates may have sometimes been inaccurately tempted by statement D '*It's always essential for me to exercise in a variety of ways.*' for **Question 27**. Whereas the speaker says: '*Some weeks, I choose to do several different kinds of exercise, and others just one – it depends how I'm feeling.*', however, the speaker doesn't refer to this idea as being essential.

In **Question 29**, candidates sometimes gave statement A '*I base mine around some online videos I found.*' as their response. Less successful candidates were most likely distracted by the speaker mentioning '*videos online*'.

Exercise 5

In this part of the test, candidates were required to listen to a semi-formal interview with a woman who creates sculptures and answer 8 multiple-choice questions. Overall, the vast majority of candidates attempted this part of the test very well.

Candidates particularly excelled at **Questions 37–39** but were also relatively successful with **Question 33 and 35**. The lowest level of success for many candidates was mainly in **Question 34 and 40**. In **Question 40**, option **C** was often mistakenly selected. The question targets the advice that the speaker gives to people who want to start creating sculptures. The correct idea is expressed in option **A** '*learn a wide variety of techniques*'. Many gave the idea of '*use your emotions to inspire you*' in option **C** as their response, as they were most likely tempted by '*use feelings as a starting point*' in the recording. However, the speaker refers to this as an error, not as something that she recommends people should do.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/31
Speaking

Key messages

- The vast majority of examiners followed the script and timings for each part of the test.
- When responses from candidates are shorter than expected, examiners are advised to refer to guidance provided on page 6 of the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes.
- Candidates would benefit from regular practice talking about everyday topics. Candidates should practise developing ideas and giving reasons for opinions before coming to a conclusion. If candidates are encouraged to practise presenting both sides of an argument, they will be able to demonstrate a wider range of vocabulary and avoid repetition.

General comments

Introduction

The script was delivered well. Candidates answered better when examiners kept to the script and did not rephrase it.

Warm-up

This part of the test was conducted well with appropriate timing. The majority of candidates were asked all three questions.

Part 1 – Interview

This section was generally well conducted, with examiners keeping to the script and prompting further discussion by using the prompts provided in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes. Strong responses to questions were relevant and well developed. 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.

Part 2 – Short talk

The script and preparation timing were mostly adhered to.

Candidates did well when they asked for clarification at the beginning of the preparation period and used the full time to prepare both options. Examiners can use additional questions provided on page 6 of the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes if candidates do not speak for the full amount of time.

Stronger candidates were able to compare and contrast the benefits and drawbacks of each activity, and then give a final opinion on which option they would prefer and why. Strong responses included a range of structures (conditionals, comparatives) and topic-specific language.

Although candidates do not need to talk about both options, candidates who discuss both often perform better as they can demonstrate a larger range of structures and vocabulary and avoid repetition of ideas. They also need to use appropriate linking devices to organise their points.

Part 3 – Discussion

Stronger candidates were able to develop their responses by beginning generally and expanding with more personal examples, using a range of tenses, verb patterns and linking devices. Strong responses included

appropriate vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas, facts and opinions. Many candidates responded relevantly using simple and complex sentence structures.

Application of the marking criteria

Grammar

This criterion was generally correctly applied, with a slight tendency to mark severely on particular errors, and to mark generously when structures were accurate but not complex.

Vocabulary

Most centres accurately applied the vocabulary marking criterion. Some occasional 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.

Development

Most centres accurately applied this criterion. Examiners should note that this criterion refers to both relevance and development, and to take all three parts into consideration. For example, where there was severe marking, this might have been 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 **Part 1** and **Part 3**. In other cases, generous marking appeared to have been applied when a candidate spoke at length or spoke quickly, even when what they said was quite repetitive or did not develop the topic.

Pronunciation

Although generally accurate, there was a slight tendency towards severe marking. Candidates who spoke with a strong local accent yet articulated each sound distinctly and/or used intonation well should still score well in this criterion. Strong candidates were clear and used intonation to convey meaning, particularly when expressing a personal opinion.

Administration

Recordings

Most centres provided recordings of good quality which began with the required information. Where quality was of a lower standard, it was usually because of where the microphone had been placed, or because of background noise. Some candidates need to be reminded to speak up.

Documentation

This was generally done accurately. There were a few examples of centres incorrectly using the old summary forms with marks out of 30. Some had incorrect totals on the summary form or had been incorrectly transferred to Submit for Assessment.

Internal moderation

Internal moderation was conducted correctly at many centres. If more than one examiner is used, internal moderation must be carried out where the lead examiner listens to a top, middle, bottom range of candidates from each examiner identifying if adjustments are required. The internally moderated marks should be recorded on the Speaking Examination Summary Form.

Comments on specific speaking assessments

Speaking assessment A

Part 1 – Interview: Cooking

A range of food vocabulary was used appropriately to discuss fast food and eating healthily. Topic-specific vocabulary included '*macronutrients*', '*high fibre*', '*saturated fats*'. All three questions were answered with

good development by most candidates. In **Question 2** some focused only on the food consumed rather than the occasion. Strong candidates used language for giving opinion (*'in my opinion'*, *'I think you should'*). Past tenses and descriptive language formed part of the responses to this question. Most agreed with the third question (*'We are growing up to be parents, so this is needed'*, *'I'm fussy and won't eat outside food so I have to'*). A range of simple and complex structures (e.g. tenses, conditionals, relative clauses) were used by many strong candidates.

Part 2 – Short talk: Inventions

Both options were discussed by most candidates. Stronger candidates were able to give their preference in the two-minute timeframe. There was no majority choice between the two options, but it was evident that some teenagers do not use remote controls as they watch content on their devices. Strong candidates used a number of effective cohesive devices used to develop responses (*'Firstly...'*, *'In addition...'*, *'Moreover...'*, *'However...'*).

Part 3 – Discussion

All four questions were answered well by candidates. Strong candidates used language for giving opinion as well as future and perfect tenses. Most candidates agreed with the first question and gave clear reasons (*'younger mind-set'*, *'difficult to navigate apps'*, *'the world evolves'*). Strong responses included a range of structures that were used with confidence (*'If they have a disability, new technologies can help them'*, *'They're shocked when they see new devices that have been developed.'*).

Speaking assessment B

Part 1 – Interview: Staying healthy

Strong candidates referred to the fast pace of life and the need to look after one's mental health as well as the importance of a balanced diet. Weaker candidates used simple structures, or repeated ideas. Stronger candidates used linking devices, past tenses, prepositional phrases, adverbs and comparatives (*'We don't move as much as in the past'*, *'There are not many parks or open spaces now'*).

Part 2 – Short Talk: School newspaper

Strong responses included a range of structures (e.g. conditionals, comparatives, linking devices) and topic-specific language. Most candidates talked about both options, giving pros and cons. The majority of candidates chose a report on a sports event as their preferred option, and they tended to focus on the subject matter (i.e. sports event versus holiday) and did not differentiate between the writing styles required for a report compared to a short story.

Part 3 – Discussion

The majority of candidates agreed that young people are not interested in the news, unless it is a topic that interests them (*'not all people like to read'*). It was generally agreed that they get their news from social media platforms. Strong candidates talked about *'how writing a diary before going to bed helps you get things off your chest'*. Conditionals, comparatives and superlatives were used by most strong candidates (*'If I were to choose between...'*).

Speaking assessment C

Part 1 – Interview: Being helpful

For **Question 1**, weaker candidates tended to keep answers fairly short and list specific tasks that they helped with at home (e.g. *'cleaning'*, *'cooking'*, etc.), including adverbs such as *'usually'* or *'sometimes'*, while stronger candidates developed their responses with more detailed discussion of when and why they might help out (*'helps create stronger bonds'*). Stronger candidates also used conditionals and more collocations such as *'do the dishes'*, *'do the laundry'*, *'make my bed'*. Some stronger candidates used a variety of past tenses when responding to **Question 2**, but not all recognised that the question invited them to switch from the present tenses generally used when responding to **Question 1**. For **Question 3**, stronger candidates used modal verbs to talk about obligation and necessity, and precise vocabulary to describe activities.

Part 2 – Short talk: A holiday abroad

Most candidates were able to justify a preference for one or the other option on the card, and stronger candidates gave a balanced discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each, often using linking devices effectively (e.g. '*on the other hand*' and '*however*') to structure their talk. When discussing the capital city, candidates were able to discuss the pros ('*historical sights*', '*entertaining nightlife*', '*culturally rich*') and also discussed cons at length ('*a hot bed of congestion and pollution*', '*being crowded*'). For the national park, candidates were able to describe the environment and what they could do ('*seeing animals in their natural habitat*', '*surrounded by beautiful scenery*', '*go for long hikes*'). Most candidates were able to use comparative language when discussing the two options ('*a city is more interesting*', '*there is less pollution in a natural park*'), but this was not always accurately used by weaker candidates.

Part 3 – Discussion

Weaker candidates' responses were generally relevant but often limited in scope, although with appropriate vocabulary relating to climate change and the environment ('*global warming*', '*pollution*', '*crowds*'). Strong candidates used a range of vocabulary, structures and functional language to express ideas and talk about the effects of tourism ('*You could argue that...*'; '*but on the other hand...*'; '*sometimes it does more harm than good*'). Stronger candidates also produced well developed answers on the moral and ethical implications of travelling by plane, and gave well-articulated answers about the need for all young people to work or study abroad ('*you'll step out of your comfort zone*'; '*you might get to know new cultures*'; '*if you have the financial ability to afford to study abroad, doing it can be a very positive thing for you*').

Speaking assessment D

Part 1 – Interview: Your local area

In response to the first question both stronger and weaker candidates did not always extend much beyond listing types of shops and using structures such as '*there is/are*'. Responses to **Question 3** often focused on environmental concerns (how noisy the area is) or security (how safe the area is).

Part 2 – Short talk: A sports event

Most candidates were able to compare some features of each option, although some limited their response solely to their preference, basing it on personal experience. Weaker candidates sometimes restricted their reasoning to basic adjectives such as '*boring*' and '*exciting*'. Stronger candidates developed their responses further, for example with other topic-related language ('*a high probability of getting injured*', '*rivalry*', '*cross the finish line*'), and other structures to describe and explain their preference. They also showed greater control of some more complex comparative structures ('*I'd rather take part in a football match than in a half-marathon*') and used conditionals to justify their choice ('*If I made my team lose, I'd be very upset.*').

Part 3 – Discussion

Responses to the first two questions varied according to what experience candidates of sports or singing. Many candidates thought that singing would be more difficult as one would have to have '*a good voice*', '*stay in tune with others*' and '*learn to breathe properly*'. The fourth question elicited some of the strongest responses from candidates, e.g. '*Footballers may earn a lot, but their careers are shorter than most people's and their risks are greater too*'. Stronger candidates used precise vocabulary and intonation to emphasise their ideas ('*If they're good at it, they **should** earn a lot of money; It **can** inspire people*').

Speaking Assessment E

Part 1 – Interview: Jobs

In response to **Question 1**, weaker candidates tended to list jobs with little detail and stronger candidates commented on how complex or demanding they are, using a wider range of structures and vocabulary ('*My father works as a surgeon and has been doing it for over 10 years and he loves it although it can be challenging*'). Most candidates were able to produce a range of future forms as well as the present simple and continuous when responding to the second question. Stronger candidates were able to hypothesise or speculate how easy or difficult it would be to get into or do a certain job. Weaker candidates used simpler linking words such as '*because*', '*and*', '*so*'. Weaker responses to **Question 3** were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures. Stronger candidates used appropriate functional language of opinion,

agreement, evaluation and speculation (*'I totally disagree with that idea because...'*). Strong responses to all three questions were relevant and well developed, whereas weaker responses were often limited to only one or two short sentences for each question.

Part 2 – Short talk: Listening to music

Strong responses included a range of structures and cohesive devices. The most popular and the most successful approach was to develop the talk by first introducing the context, then explaining the advantages and disadvantages of option one (concert) before moving onto the second option (at home), then finishing with the stated preference with a summary of the reasons. Stronger candidates used a range of tenses and topic-specific vocabulary (*'If I were to go to a live concert, I would take my best friend with me for sure'*; *'far better than....'*; *'your own space'*; *'you get to meet the artist'*; *'streaming services'*). 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 in no clear order or rhetorical pattern.

Part 3 – Discussion

The questions elicited appropriate and often sophisticated vocabulary, a range of tenses, conditionals and comparatives. Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies, such as repeating the words in the question, subject/verb agreement errors, or only using the present tense.

Strong responses to all three questions were relevant and well developed, with some very extended answers. In **Part 3** (like **Part 1**), strong responses first directly answered the question, then provided reasoning and examples, whereas weaker responses were often limited to only one or two short sentences for each question. Stronger answers to all questions in each section were clear and easy to understand, and intonation was used to good effect. Weaker responses were not always clear, and intonation was rarely used to convey intended meaning.

Speaking assessment F

Part 1 – Interview: Art

Strong responses to all three questions elicited a wide range of vocabulary and simple and complex structures. For example, strong candidates gave extended answers that involved a range of tenses, modal verbs, conditionals, comparatives and superlatives, and sophisticated topic-specific vocabulary (*'calligraphy'*, *'mosaic'*, *'abstract art'*, *'expressionist'*). Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies, for example, only using present simple tense. Strong responses to all three questions were relevant and well developed. For example, for **Question 1** strong responses not only described the family's overall art preferences, but also noted what specific family members liked before explaining why. Weaker responses were often limited to only one or two short sentences for each question.

Part 2 – Short talk: Giving a presentation

Strong responses included a range of sentence structures, tenses and cohesive devices. A wide range of topic-specific vocabulary was used by strong candidates, e.g. *'see the animals close-up'*, *'become extinct'*, *'habitat'*, *'destruction'*.

Part 3 – Discussion

Question 1 and **2** were addressed well on the whole, with answers connected to notions of animal cruelty. Stronger responses explored issues of nutrition, human evolution and environmental impact. **Question 3** often elicited responses about the future – proving oneself at work or in an interview, with stronger candidates often suggesting social skills and confidence could be improved. **Question 4** was expanded on well by the strong candidates who were able to give a slightly more complex analysis of responsibility and caring rather than just simple adjectives and likes/dislikes.

Speaking assessment G

Part 1 – Interview: Clothes

Strong responses used a range of grammatical structures, including past tenses in **Question 2** (*'We were eating, and I spilt soup on my white shirt'*) and passives with a good degree of accuracy in **Question 3** (*'A lot of people are pressured into getting the latest fashion trends'*). Appropriate and precise vocabulary included

idioms ('dress to impress') and phrasal verbs ('fit in', 'showing off'). Stronger candidates were able to develop their ideas in **Question 1** by distinguishing between different seasons or social occasions. Many candidates spoke about a wedding or graduation for **Question 2**. Weaker responses were limited to the use of simple vocabulary and simple structures such as the present simple. Many candidates agreed that '*young people buy too many clothes nowadays*'.

Part 2 – Short talk: Being environmentally friendly

Most candidates were able to develop their responses and offer some detail, both by talking about the environmental impact of flights and smartphones, and about how easy or difficult it would be to change their lifestyles. Strong responses included a range of structures and tenses ('*If we stop travelling by plane, it will reduce carbon emissions*'; '*I have become attached to my phone*') and topic-specific vocabulary ('carbon footprint', 'eco-friendly'). The most popular approach was to develop the talk by explaining how easy or difficult each option might be and then giving a final opinion on which option they would prefer and why. Linking phrases were used by stronger candidates. Weaker candidates tended to focus on the use of planes and smartphones in general but did not develop a response as to which option they preferred.

Part 3 – Discussion

Stronger candidates developed all four points in detail, discussing different types of pollution and possible solutions. This section gave stronger candidates the opportunity to demonstrate a range of vocabulary ('regulations', 'final say', 'researchers', 'obligatory) and structures ('*You wouldn't be able to find such things if ads were banned*'). Weaker candidates tended to provide more repetitive answers and used a limited range of language.

Speaking assessment H

Part 1 – Interview: Animals

Many candidates spoke about cats and how these '*help release stress and you won't feel lonely*'. Weaker responses included simple vocabulary and simple structures. Descriptions such as '*cute and delicate*' were offered by some of the weaker candidates who were less likely to develop their responses. Stronger candidates demonstrated the use of precise vocabulary to talk about animals they find interesting ('*predators*', '*reptiles*', '*hibernate*'). They also used a range of verb tenses ('*I've always been fascinated by...*'). The second question required the use of past tenses, which weaker responses sometimes lacked. Candidates were able to develop their responses well for all three questions, with many discussing service dogs or police dogs for **Question 3**.

Part 2 – Short talk: Ways of learning

Most candidates were able to develop their ideas in detail, often referring to their experience during the pandemic when talking about online learning. Strong responses included a range of structures (conditionals and comparatives) and topic-specific language to discuss the pros and cons of different ways of learning ('*interactive*', '*socialising*', '*accomplish*', '*distractions*', '*rowdy*'). The most successful approach was to explain how easy or difficult each option would be for them, then give a final opinion on which option they would prefer and why. Stronger responses covered the benefits and drawbacks of studying online and then considered the advantages and disadvantages of working with others on a school project. Many candidates used appropriate linking phrases, such as '*in my opinion*' and '*in addition*'. Weaker candidates relied on simpler vocabulary and structures, and often tended to repeat their ideas rather than develop them.

Part 3 – Discussion

Stronger candidates used a wide variety of vocabulary to support their ideas ('*stressful*', '*appreciate*', '*value*'). Weaker responses were shorter and included a limited range of structures and vocabulary. Stronger responses considered the benefits of studying abroad such as '*learning about the history of another country*'. In terms of language, more successful responses attempted greater complexity of grammatical structures and made more use of the conditional and future tense.

Speaking assessment I

Part 1 – Interview: Popular music

Strong candidates were able to develop their answers to all three questions, including appropriate and accurate use of narrative tenses for the second question. Examples of effective language included referring to a singer who '*gives out a message you can relate to*'. Strong responses often drew on vocabulary of emotions to discuss the effect a particular singer/group had on candidates, or used sophisticated terms to discuss different music styles and included a range of structures (e.g. modal verbs, conditionals) and topic-specific language ('*cardio exercise*', '*build up your strength*', '*fit as a fiddle*'). Weaker candidates' responses were significantly shorter and tended to use only present tenses for the second question.

Part 2 – Short talk: Lifestyle

Strong responses included a wide range of vocabulary connected to healthy lifestyles ('*a balanced diet*', '*aerobic*', '*nutrition*'). Weaker candidates focused only on one option and often repeated ideas in an effort to keep going for two minutes. Strong responses used present perfect forms to link the question to the candidate's own lifestyle ('*I've been cycling to school for years*'). Most candidates were able to use adverbs of frequency to describe lifestyle routines ('*I don't often cook*') and comparatives to talk about the relative importance of exercise and nutrition. Many strong responses focused on mental as well as physical health or went into detail about practical issues such as cycle lanes, traffic risks or finding time for cooking. For weaker candidates the common approach to the topic was to primarily focus on their preferred option and discuss it in detail, with limited development made regarding the second option.

Part 3 – Discussion

Strong candidates successfully developed answers to all four questions, often using precise vocabulary ('*you need to train your mind to discipline your body*', '*mental health*' and '*meditation*'). In response to the final question, most candidates agreed that being a doctor is a '*satisfying*' and '*well-paid*' job. Strong responses developed ideas raised in the short talk, and candidates at all levels were able to give opinions and use linking phrases such as '*on the other hand*', '*however*' to discuss advantages and disadvantages. The strongest answers combined personal views with general ideas ('*I faint when I see blood, so I couldn't work as a doctor, but in general ...*') and used sophisticated vocabulary to consider issues like obesity/addiction versus choice/freedom.

Speaking assessment J

Part 1 – Interview: Free-time activities

Strong candidates were able to develop their answers to all three questions, including appropriate and accurate use of narrative tenses for the second question. The third question elicited some well developed answers from stronger candidates who discussed their reasons using conditionals and complex sentences. Strong responses included opinions on the activities described in **Question 1**, often using modals ('*People should spend less time on computers*') and present simple/continuous forms to consider both general routines and current trends. Weaker responses tended to list activities, but candidates at all levels were able to describe a past activity for **Question 2**, using a range of past tenses with varying degrees of success. **Question 3** provoked clear opinions on both sides, with stronger responses discussing different types of friendships (groups, clubs, close friends).

Part 2 – Short talk: Studying a story

Strong candidates looked at both options and discussed the merits of their choice. Some candidates chose to read the story as they could use their imagination and the author's original words, whereas others found the film an easier option. Stronger candidates developed both points almost equally providing examples of benefits and disadvantages for each option ('*If I had to read the book it would take me days to finish reading it, whereas on the other hand watching a film*'). Weaker candidates focused only on one option and often repeated the same points. Strong responses used a range of conditional and comparative forms to speculate and discuss preferences. Some sophisticated vocabulary around imagination and visual/audio/written forms was produced ('*soundtrack*', '*visualise*').

Part 3 – Discussion

Strong candidates were able to use a wide variety of vocabulary and structures and to demonstrate a range of intonation patterns. In answer to the first question, many candidates thought that libraries '*offer a calm environment for study*' and, in answer to the third question, that '*actors risk having their privacy compromised*'. Weaker responses were often brief and lacked development. Strong responses used a range of clauses of comparison and contrast to explore ideas around digital versus print libraries and the ways home technology can enhance '*the experience of viewing a film at home*'. Weaker answers included descriptions of personal experience of language learning in response to the last question. Pronunciation and intonation were mostly clear and consistent.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/32
Speaking

Key messages

- Most examiners followed the instructions included in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes and encouraged candidates to go beyond simple answers and develop their responses.
- Candidates appeared to be well prepared and generally understood the format of the test.
- Candidates should listen carefully to the tense used in each question to respond with precision.
- Candidates would benefit from practising giving the Part 2 talk in two minutes, in order to become accustomed to the timing and structure of this part of the test.

General comments

Introduction

The tests were generally successfully delivered. Many examiners used a timer to ensure candidates were given the correct amount of time for each part of the test. Almost all centres followed the script and correctly informed candidates about which parts of the test would be assessed.

Warm-up

During the warm-up, weaker candidates needed follow-up questions to extend their responses. If candidates give short answers, examiners can ask open extension questions, as given in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes, to ensure the warm-up lasts 1–2 minutes.

Part 1 – Interview

Some candidates only responded in the present tense to **Question 2** which targets a narrative/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. In most centres, this part was timed well. Examiners should read out the questions, using the exact wording on the card.

Part 2 – Short talk

The preparation periods were mostly one minute, and only a few candidates asked the examiner to clarify words or instructions during this time. For this part, examiners should allow candidates to speak for the whole time and should not interrupt or conduct a conversation.

Many candidates managed the talk well, covering both options and stating their preference at the end. Most candidates were able to speak at length for the full two minutes, although some needed some support and/or encouragement from the examiner (in accordance with the examiner prompts on page 6 of the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes).

Part 3 – Discussion

Having completed **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the test, many candidates were thoroughly warmed up at this stage and often excelled in giving opinions and developing the discussion using a good range of structures and vocabulary. Candidates benefitted when examiners used follow-up questions to encourage development.

Some examiners simply asked the question, waited for a response, however long or short, and moved to the next question. If a candidate has not understood, examiners can refer to additional instructions in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes.

Application of the marking criteria

Grammar

This was generally marked accurately. Candidates were given credit for their ability to use a range of complex structures such as passive voice, conditional sentences, relative clauses and variety of modal verbs and tenses. In some centres, marking was slightly generous when candidates spoke naturally but without using a range of grammatical structures or more sophisticated forms. The overall tendency is to mark generously in the upper mark range, perhaps based on the examiner's knowledge of the candidate's overall ability in English rather than the candidate's performance in the test. On the other hand, marking could be slightly severe when examiners focused too much on small errors.

Vocabulary

This was generally accurately marked, but with a tendency to mark generously for the repeated use of technical language rather than the effective or appropriate use of functional vocabulary. This is noticeable in the higher mark range where examiners need to take 'with precision' into account. In the lower mark range, some centres marked slightly severely, whereas examiners could credit lexical structures such as collocations or fixed expressions more favourably.

Development

Candidates were credited for developing their ideas and structuring their responses. There is a tendency for centres to be severe towards less able candidates and generous towards the more able candidates. For example, sometimes quantity of speech was over-generously marked and, in these cases, candidates were credited for maintaining communication, even when answers were not entirely relevant to the topic.

Pronunciation

Many centres did not appear to assess pronunciation as a stand-alone criterion. The mark given was often matched to marks for other criteria, even if, for example, an otherwise weak candidate had good pronunciation and used intonation to convey meaning. Examiners sometimes marked over-severely for accent, even if pronunciation was otherwise clear, and intonation effectively used. Candidates and examiners alike need to remember that pronunciation should be clear, and intonation used to communicate meaning, particularly when expressing a personal opinion.

Administration

Recordings

Most centres provided recordings of high quality. Very occasionally, candidates were not close enough to the microphone or the sound of rustling paper, or of loud air-conditioning, covered their voices. It would be helpful for examiners to consider this when setting up for the exam.

Documentation

Most centres carried out the administration well. In some centres, errors were made in the transfer of marks from the Speaking Examination Summary Form to the total marks submitted. Centres should check very carefully if the marks for all the candidates are submitted, and internally moderated marks have been included where applicable. All the candidates examined by each examiner should be included on the same Speaking Examination Summary Form in order to limit the number of forms submitted. Where possible, the form should be completed electronically, not handwritten.

Internal moderation

Many centres conducted internal moderation correctly. Internal moderation must be conducted if more than one examiner is used. 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.

Comments on specific speaking assessments

Speaking assessment A

Part 1 – Interview: Sports

Most candidates mentioned football when answering questions in this part of the test. When responding to **Question 1** and **Question 3**, stronger candidates made use of gerunds and modal verbs. Weaker candidates mainly used present simple to describe sports that people enjoy playing or watching, whereas stronger candidates were able to compare present and past habits with ‘used to’ or ‘would’. For the second question, stronger candidates were able to use a range of tenses, including present perfect and past perfect. With regard to older people doing sport, stronger candidates compared different types of sport and what effects they would have, while weaker candidates attempted to use the first conditional only.

Part 2 – Short talk: International visitors

When responding to this task, candidates used a variety of structures and vocabulary, often mentioning real-life experiences. Weaker responses tended to focus on the chosen option and say very little about the second option. Strong responses included a range of structures (conditionals, comparatives) and topic-specific language. The most popular choice was having party at school with food and music from your culture.

Part 3 – Discussion

Strong candidates were able to develop their ideas well and at times referred to previous comments and ideas. Weaker responses included mainly relevant ideas but lacked development. Stronger candidates used phrasal verbs and colloquial expressions related to the topic of travelling (*‘travel can widen your perspective and develop your personality’*), whereas vocabulary was limited to transport and accommodation with weaker candidates. Weaker responses included simple clauses and structures which were often unfinished.

Speaking assessment B

Part 1 – Interview: Having fun

The majority of candidates talked about video games or other online activities for **Question 1**. Some also discussed sports or hanging out with friends and used appropriate vocabulary to describe those leisure activities. Most candidates were able to discuss **Question 2** using past tenses. **Question 3** elicited future tenses.

Part 2 – Short talk: Environmental problems

Stronger candidates were able to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of writing about each type of problem, with many choosing ‘litter’ as a topic which would be easier to write about. Strong responses included a range of structures (conditionals, comparatives) and topic-specific language (*‘carbon dioxide’*, *‘might cause disease’*, *‘hazardous’*, *‘photosynthesis’*). Weaker responses tended to focus on the chosen option and say very little about the second option (especially noise pollution).

Part 3 – Discussion

Both strong and weak candidates were able to talk at length on topic related to the natural environment. Some precise vocabulary, such as *‘soothing’*, *‘waterfall’*, *‘construction site’*, was used by stronger candidates. Weaker candidates tended to utilise more everyday lexis such as *‘annoying’* compared to *‘infuriating’* for a stronger candidate.

Speaking assessment C

Part 1 – Interview: Nature

Almost all candidates were able to discuss a place in their country with relative ease. Most candidates responded to **Question 2** using past tenses and to **Question 3** using 'should'. The past tense was used accurately when describing a visit to a natural location. Stronger candidates were able to provide some justification for their opinions. Most candidates responded very well to the first two questions using a variety of vocabulary and structures ('full of greenery', 'I got to experience', 'it was an absolute delight'). Responses were more varied to the last question; stronger candidates mentioned identifying poisonous plants and commented on moral issues such as the need for children to understand that 'this planet is not only ours'.

Part 2 – Short talk: Good news

Stronger candidates were able to compare and contrast the pros and cons of each option, and generally chose the interaction with peers over the internet stories. Weaker responses tended to focus on the chosen option and say very little about the second option. Some candidates preferred the option of research on the internet, citing the sheer amount of information as an obvious advantage. Stronger candidates were able to elaborate using appropriate vocabulary.

Part 3 – Discussion

Overall, most responses in this part of the test were developed well with opinions and justifications frequently described in detail. Some candidates needed the word 'journalist' to be explained. Strong responses described the 'challenges' of the job with quite varied subject-specific vocabulary ('analytical abilities'), whereas weaker candidates talked about writing 'different stories'. The dangers of social media were well explored in the second question ('we don't know what kind of people'), with modals and conditionals well used. Stronger candidates used precise vocabulary ('get involved', 'at risk', 'targeted'). They were also able to develop their ideas well, while weaker candidates provided little justification for their opinions. In response to the last question, stronger candidates used some emotive vocabulary ('an instant smile on their face').

Speaking assessment D

Part 1 – Interview: Mobile phones

Strong responses to all three questions used a wide range of subject-specific lexis and a range of simple and complex structures with particular emphasis on appropriate tenses. A majority of candidates used appropriate collocations related to the topic, such as 'contact friends and family', 'use social media' or 'surf the internet/search for information on the Internet'. Strong responses to **Question 2** used past tenses to relate anecdotes highlighting how mobile phones proved to be useful ('Thanks to my mobile phone I was able to call my mum and find the way out'). More ambitious responses included a wider variety of past tenses and expressions to talk about the past, such as 'used to'. Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures and tended to focus on the usefulness of mobile phones rather than a time in the past when a mobile was useful ('get to learn more', 'can self-study'). In response to the last question, strong candidates supported their views with examples and speculated on the effect of a ban. Some also contrasted a total ban on mobile phones in school with a ban on classroom use.

Part 2 – Short talk: Study options

Strong responses included an introduction to the topic and a brief explanation of how the talk would be organised: 'Considering the two options, X and Y, they both have their pros and cons, which I will talk about now'. After the opening sentence, outlining the organisation of the talk, strong candidates went on to outline what each of the two options would entail and why one of them offered more benefits. The most popular choice was going to a local university although many candidates acknowledged the benefits of both options. Stronger responses included conditionals ('If I were to ...') and a variety of cohesive devices to construct more complex sentence structures. Weaker responses either focused on only one of the options or did not state clearly which option they would prefer.

Part 3 – Discussion

Strong responses included a wide range of vocabulary and structures. In the stronger responses, candidates used examples to illustrate their points and effectively used intonation to emphasise their opinions. Weaker responses included mainly relevant ideas using a limited range of structures and vocabulary, but there was

little development. This is where appropriate use of follow-up questions by the examiner could encourage a fuller discussion.

Speaking assessment E

Part 1 – Interview: Languages

Strong responses to all three questions were detailed and well developed, with a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary ('attend a language course', 'gain knowledge', 'improve pronunciation'). There were also references to online learning, with language learning apps proving popular. In addition to a range of simple grammatical structures, more complex ones were attempted with emphasis on appropriate verb tenses, particularly when addressing **Question 2**, which prompted anecdotes about communicating in another language. Stronger candidates were also able to give opinions, explain reasons and speculate using modals, ('even if you can't speak the language, you can use your hands'). Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and structures with frequent inaccuracies such as using the present tense instead of past.

Part 2 – Short talk: Family time

Stronger candidates indicated how they were going to structure their talk and used signposting language to indicate changes in the argument and the conclusion ('So, I'm going to consider the following options...'). Strong responses included a range of structures (conditional sentences, relative clauses, comparatives) and subject-specific language ('theme park', 'diverse leisure activities') as well as adjectives to describe both options ('exhilarating', 'appropriate'). While discussing the pros and cons of an option, they used appropriate linking words ('especially if it's a playground park, kids may have a lot of fun there'; 'however, such places may be messy'; 'on the other hand, they may get bored during the movie'). Weaker candidates often simply discussed the two options in general.

Part 3 – Discussion

There were some mature responses in response to the questions in this part of the test. Strong responses showed good control of compound sentences, correct use of narrative tenses and other more complex structures. Many candidates expressed a variety of ideas, facts and opinions using precise vocabulary ('I don't believe that technology can enhance family bonds. In fact, it probably has a detrimental effect on most families'). Strong responses also used conditionals to talk about possible career choices and situations in which technology might help or hinder family relationships. Intonation was used effectively to convey intended meaning, particularly when more emphatic structures were chosen to give opinion. Weaker candidates gave brief but relevant answers which included a limited range of structures and vocabulary.

Speaking assessment F

Part 1 – Interview: The weather

Strong answers were characterized by detailed explanations and the inclusion of personal experiences or broader context. Candidates used a wide range of vocabulary including linking words to provide structure and took advantage of **Question 2** to demonstrate the use of narrative tenses and other questions to demonstrate the first conditional and modal verbs. This question provided an opportunity to use a range of vocabulary related to weather ('boiling', 'freezing', 'storm'). In response to **Question 3**, many candidates were able to use a range of vocabulary to describe feelings ('mood', 'uninspired', 'uplifting', 'energetic').

Part 2 – Short talk: Games

More successful talks compared and contrasted both speakers and advice they could offer to young people, and then speculated how enjoyable each talk might be ('I suppose people my age nowadays play a lot of video games, so they'd welcome a talk by a video game designer.'). Many candidates finished by stating their personal preference followed by a reason. Weaker candidates talked about their preferred choice only.

Part 3 – Discussion

Strong candidates used a wide variety of language to discuss their ideas, often at length. This included structures such as future tenses, modal verbs, passive voice and conditionals. More successful responses also included a range of spoken discourse markers ('that's an interesting question', 'for example for me...', 'let me think...', 'how can I put this...?'). Stronger candidates were able to use more precise and idiomatic

vocabulary ('quality time', 'bend/follow the rules', 'have a laugh') and developed their answers with examples, addressing multiple aspects of the questions. This allowed them to demonstrate complex sentence structures. They also provided well organised responses ('Firstly...', 'Lastly...'). Weaker responses were brief and lacked development.

Speaking assessment G

Part 1 – Interview: Music

In response to **Question 1**, many candidates simply listed popular artists. Strong candidates gave fully developed responses using a range of simple and complex structures and extended their answer by discussing what music they enjoy in general and how it makes them feel, using extensive and relevant precise vocabulary ('uplifting', 'addictive', 'genre', 'motivating'). Weaker candidates frequently required clarification of 'people your age'. Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures. Many weaker candidates did not attempt to use past tenses to respond to **Question 2**. Instead, they spoke about music that they generally listen to.

Part 2 – Short talk: Accommodation

This short talk produced quite successful and well structured responses. The most popular option was a house by the sea, often using a good range of vocabulary to state reasons ('relaxation', 'calmness', 'lack of noise'/light pollution). Most candidates were able to use a wide variety of descriptors, and grammatical forms like comparatives, conditionals and modal verbs as well as demonstrating an ability to structure their talk with phrases such as 'however', 'moreover', 'on the other hand'. Weaker candidates either just focused on one option or dedicated most of the time to saying why they liked it, often repeating the same points.

Part 3 – Discussion

Most candidates were able to explore the advantages and disadvantages of working in either a hotel or a restaurant. Many candidates used conditionals and a range of topic-related vocabulary ('hotel manager', 'customers', 'working as a receptionist', 'waiters', 'exhausting', 'underpaid', 'long working hours'). The most successful responses explored the importance of outdoor space for our mental health ('I always find the plants really beautiful to look at and it calms me down'), how it can be used to provide opportunities to keep fit ('I help my parents in the garden and it's like a work-out') and the importance of trees. Many strong candidates used a wide range of precise vocabulary and appropriate collocations ('absorb CO₂ emissions', 'weeds', 'autumnal colours', 'we're so fortunate to have a garden'). Candidates also gained marks by using a range of clauses to provide extra information and to explain their opinions. Weaker candidates tended to give very short responses and had to be supported by additional questions to further develop their answers.

Speaking assessment H

Part 1 – Interview: Reading

Strong responses were relevant and well developed with the use of a range of sentence structures and tenses. In response to **Question 3**, many candidates were able to use a wide range of vocabulary, with good pronunciation and expressive intonation ('Although electronic books are very popular, I believe paper books will not be outdated because people like the feel of flipping the pages'). Weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with frequent errors in subject/verb agreement, the use of prepositions and tenses.

Part 2 – Short Talk: School holidays

Strong responses included a range of structures (conditionals, comparatives, modal verbs) and topic-specific language. Stronger candidates started by stating that both options have advantages and disadvantages and then developed the talk by explaining and supporting their opinions ('as', 'since', 'which allows me to') before reaching a final decision on which option they would prefer and why. The most popular choice was getting a part-time job. Stronger candidates used linking devices and intonation to convey meaning. Weaker responses tended to focus on the chosen option and rarely reached a conclusion.

Part 3 – Discussion

Strong responses used precise vocabulary to discuss a variety of ideas. Strong candidates offered relevant responses in which ideas and opinions were explained in detail. Weaker responses included mainly relevant points, used simple structures and vocabulary but often lacked sufficient detail to develop the ideas.

Speaking assessment I

Part 1 – Interview: Jobs

Strong responses to all three questions used a wide range of simple and complex structures (modal verbs, conditionals, comparatives) with particular emphasis on appropriate verb tenses ('*I dreamt of always saving the day when people are in trouble, just like Spiderman*'). Stronger candidates introduced a wide range of vocabulary, whereas weaker responses were limited to simple vocabulary and simple structures with inaccuracies and omissions in the use of tenses and other verb forms. To achieve the best marks, candidates should attempt to use a range of past tenses when asked about a past event and future tenses when asked to speculate about the future.

Part 2 – Short Talk: A special meal

Strong responses included a range of structures (conditionals, comparatives) and topic-specific language. The most successful candidates developed the talk by explaining how preferable each option would be for them and then gave a final opinion on which option they would prefer and why. The most popular choice was having a meal at home. Stronger candidates used appropriate linking devices and intonation to convey meaning. Weaker responses tended to focus on one of the options or only focus on the advantages for both options.

Part 3 – Discussion

Many candidates were able to provide relevant responses to all questions in this part of the test. Strong candidates successfully developed answers to all four questions, often using precise vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Weaker responses were usually relevant but often very brief and lacked development of ideas.

Speaking assessment J

Part 1 – Interview: Learning

Strong responses to all three questions were relevant and well developed. Stronger candidates were able to use both simple and complex structures with particular emphasis on appropriate verb tenses ('*We were supposed to perform a song so I decided to pick a song I felt would be easy for everyone to memorise.*'). Weaker candidates used simple structures and occasionally attempted complex structures. Their pronunciation was clear, but responses lacked fluency. Stronger responses used a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary and appropriate intonation to convey meaning.

Part 2 – Short Talk: Helping neighbours

The most popular choice was helping neighbours in their garden once a month, especially if they were being paid to do so and if it fitted in with their schoolwork. Stronger candidates used linking devices to organise their ideas ('*This comes in various forms from buying their groceries to buying clothes*', '*However, let's say if they urgently need medicine, I may not be around*'). Weaker responses focused on one of the options and discussed the challenges linked to helping neighbours in this way.

Part 3 – Discussion

When addressing **Question 1**, most candidates were able to explore the importance of a good relationship with their neighbours. Stronger responses used a wide variety of vocabulary and structures to support their ideas ('*There are obvious benefits like looking after your pet but what if you don't see eye to eye on something.*'). Weaker candidates were able to express their opinions, but they were less successful at providing clear explanations of their views. Their responses were relevant but limited in terms of the range of structures and vocabulary. Pronunciation was clear in strong responses. Weaker responses were not always clear, and intonation was rarely used to convey intended meaning.