

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9 TO 1)

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Paper 0627/01  
Reading Passages

## Key messages

Candidates should ensure that they read all questions carefully and take note of specific instructions, such as 'using your own words' or 'select **one** word'.

Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are two marks they should look for two discrete points.

Candidates should check their work carefully to avoid basic errors, especially in **Question 2** where there are 15 marks available for Writing.

In **Question 1(f)** candidates should only select language choices from the lines of the passage specified in the question.

In **Question 2** candidates should ensure that they adopt an appropriate style and register.

In **Question 2** candidates should select relevant ideas from Passage B and evaluate them in response to the task set, using the specified format and voice.

In **Question 3(c)** candidates should use the bullet points to ensure that their response covers all assessment objectives though they may choose to interweave their comments on language, structure and techniques throughout their response.

## General comments

The majority of candidates made some attempt to write a relevant response to each question on the paper, although some did not attempt all of the tasks. Although most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the specific requirements of each task, a few appeared less clear; perhaps the result of simply not reading the question carefully.

Although Passage A, *Oliver Twist*, was written in the nineteenth century, almost all candidates were able to demonstrate some understanding in their responses to **Questions 1(a) – 1(f)**. Passage B, *Heathrow is my home*, and Passage C, *Subways are for sleeping*, were drawn from the twenty-first century and twentieth century respectively and proved accessible to many candidates who appreciated the contrasting ways in which the writers conveyed their views and ideas about homelessness.

The number of tasks that candidates need to complete in this 130-minute examination is demanding. Most candidates appeared to have used their time effectively, seemingly spending more time on the questions which are worth more marks. Some candidates did not finish the paper, however, and as such, giving candidates practice in effective use of time is strongly encouraged.

Candidates should signpost their answers clearly when using the additional pages in the answer booklet by writing the number of the corresponding question in the margin.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

**Question 1** was based on Passage A, an extract from *Oliver Twist*. Despite being a nineteenth century fiction passage, most candidates found it accessible and were able to understand and follow the narrative.

**Question 1** is broken down into several questions, (a) – (e), worth between 1 and 5 marks each, totalling 15. These questions test a candidate's ability to select relevant details from the text and interpret them, as well as to comment on the writer's use of language in specific lines. **Question 1(f)** requires a more extended response regarding the writer's effects and is again based on specified sections of the text.

**(a) Re-read paragraph 1, 'It was eight ... and try to live.'**

- (i) Pick out one word which shows that someone may be following Oliver. [1]**

Most candidates gained the one mark available for this straightforward question by selecting the word 'pursued'.

- (ii) Using your own words, explain what Oliver thinks about as he sits by the milestone. [1]**

The majority of candidates gained the one mark available for this straightforward question by explaining that Oliver is thinking about where to go in order to find a place to live. Any attempt at selection, or remodelling of the correct wording from the passage, earned the mark. Lifting the whole phrase of 'where he had better go and try to live' did not qualify as a successful response.

- (b) Using your own words, give two reasons why Oliver decides that London is where he must go in Paragraph 2 ('The stone by ... walked forward.'). [2]**

The vast majority of candidates gained at least one mark here. The majority of candidates gained one mark for explaining that Oliver thinks London is a good place to hide. A number of candidates gained a further mark for also explaining that he expected to find help in London.

- (c) Using your own words explain the meaning of the following phrases as they are used in the passage:**

- (i) 'slackened his pace' (line 12) [2]**

This was another high scoring question. Most candidates were able to explain both parts of the phrase correctly; slowing down his walking speed. A few candidates found 'pace' more challenging to explain but gained one mark for a partial explanation of the phrase.

- (ii) 'meditated upon his means' (line 12) [2]**

Candidates found this part of the question somewhat challenging. Some were able to offer a meaning for 'meditated', such as thought about, and gain one mark. A number of candidates did not address the whole phrase.

- (d) Re-read lines 12–16, 'He had a crust of bread ... and truded on.'**

**What impression does the writer give of Oliver at this point? [3]**

In this question, candidates had the opportunity to gain up to three marks for relevant explanations of how Oliver is presented in the selected lines. Most candidates explained that he has a very positive mind-set. Fewer commented on his resourceful nature and his bravery, instead offering facts from the passage, such as the items in his bundle. Many responses would have benefited from closer focus on the inferences in the passage.

- (e) **'When the night came, he turned into a meadow; and creeping close under a hay-rick, determined to lie there till morning. He felt frightened at first, for the wind moaned dismally over the empty fields, and he was cold and hungry and more alone than he had ever felt before.'**

**Using your own words, explain how the writer uses language in the phrases underlined to reveal Oliver's situation.** [4]

The majority of candidates found this question reasonably accessible and were able to explain how Oliver's situation is presented as rather frightening and desperate. Many candidates commented on the descriptions of the weather, as well as Oliver's vulnerability. Some responses needed to focus more closely on explaining the effects of the language. Very few candidates gained all four marks for this question, but many were able to gain one or two marks for partial explanations.

- (f) **Re-read lines 23–35, 'He felt cold and stiff ... beyond his years to accomplish.'**

**Explain how the writer uses language and techniques to describe:**

**Oliver's physical condition  
the weather and the surroundings.**

**In your answer you should select powerful words and phrases and explain how the writer has created effects by using language and techniques.**

**You should write about 200–300 words.**

**There are up to 15 marks available for the content of your answer.**

15 marks were available for this extended response exploring the writer's effects. The specified section of the text offered candidates a wide range of language choices and techniques to discuss. Any choices and comments which focused on the bullet points in the question and offered explanations of their use were rewarded. For the vast majority of candidates, this passage proved accessible and engaging with even the less developed responses offering some relevant language choices and comments.

The strongest responses featured a range of relevant language choices, focusing on Oliver's deteriorating state. Many candidates offered interesting analyses at word and phrase level, citing words such as 'cold and stiff', 'sore', 'weak', and 'trembled' as evidence of Oliver's increasing exhaustion and difficulty in continuing. They were also able to analyse the hostility of the environment around him pointing to phrases such as 'bleak damp air' and 'window shutters were closed' as indications of Oliver feeling alone in the world with no one to help him. This was often linked to the description of him sitting with 'bleeding feet and covered with dust'. Some responses included appropriate language choices but lacked analysis of the effects of the language. A few responses made general comments on the specified section of the text but did not offer any quotations to support or illustrate them.

A few candidates did not follow the instructions in the question and selected language choices that were not in the specified lines of the passage. Any quotations outside the specified area of the passage could not be credited.

## Question 2

**Imagine that you are the writer of this article and have spent time investigating homelessness at Heathrow Airport.**

**Write a report to the British Airport Authority summarizing the reasons for homeless people choosing to live at the airport and how they overcome the difficulties they face.**

**You should write no more than 250 words.**

**There are up to 15 marks available for the quality of writing, and up to 10 marks available for the content of your answer.**

This question was based on Passage B, *Heathrow is my home*. 15 marks were available for Writing, and 10 for Reading. For the Reading marks, candidates were required to demonstrate an understanding of explicit and implicit meanings and attitudes, and to critically evaluate the facts, ideas and opinions expressed in Passage B. For the Writing marks, candidates were required to write in an appropriate voice and register, with accuracy, and using a range of sentence structures and vocabulary for effect.

Candidates appeared to have found the passage accessible and interesting with many expressing a sensitive understanding of the plight of the homeless people living at Heathrow Airport.

Candidates should be aware that to reach the higher mark bands, they are expected to select a number of appropriate ideas from the passage and evaluate them. Most candidates chose a few of the more straightforward ideas from the passage; the most popular being the warmth and safety offered by Heathrow and the possibility of avoiding detection by blending into the crowd. The strongest responses offered a more comprehensive evaluation of the information given in the article, reorganising the ideas to make them suitable for inclusion in a formal report. These sustained an objective viewpoint and reshaped the making it less personal and more focused on the issues raised.

Most candidates convincingly adopted an appropriate register and tone for a formal report. Most adopted a convincing voice and used formal language to express their views. Some responses relied heavily on the language of the passage, sometimes lifting whole phrases. Stronger responses employed a wide range of suitable vocabulary, with precision and control. Some candidates produced repetitive sentence structures, and made mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar, which occasionally impeded communication. Some candidates wrote a formal letter instead of a report, but still addressed the audience appropriately. A small number of candidates wrote a very general response to the passage repeating a few details but demonstrating no awareness of audience and purpose.

### Question 3

- (a) **Re-read paragraph 1, 'With pink lipstick ... canvas bag.' Give two reasons why this is effective as an opening paragraph.** [1]

Most responses to this question were very general and did not focus sufficiently on the question. A few candidates demonstrated an ability to identify a feature, such as a short sentence, and explain why it makes the opening of the passage effective.

- (b) **Re-read paragraphs 1–3, 'On March 4, 1953, ... "I'm happy."'**

- (i) **Using your own words, explain why Henry Shelby was locked out of his flat.** [1]

Most candidates were able to answer this question successfully by explaining that he had not paid the rent.

- (ii) **Give one fact about Henry Shelby that makes it surprising that he is homeless.** [1]

Most candidates were able to answer this question successfully by explaining that he was a university graduate or that he used to be a teacher.

- (iii) **Using your own words, explain what is meant by 'treading water' as it is used in line 9.** [1]

Many candidates successfully explained 'treading water' as suggesting that he isn't making any progress, and simply exists. Some responses offered a rather literal explanation and did not consider the meaning of the phrase in the context of the passage.

- (c) **Compare and contrast how the writers of Passage B, *Heathrow is my home*, and Passage C, *Subways are for sleeping*, convey their views and ideas about homeless people.**

**In your response you should compare and contrast:**

**the views and ideas each writer presents to the reader**

**the evidence that the writers use to support their views and ideas**

**the language, structure and techniques used by the writers and why they are effective.**

**Remember to support your answer with details from the passages.**

**You should write about 300 to 350 words.**

**There are up to 20 marks available for the content of your answer.**

The majority of candidates attempted this task. Candidates are required to think independently, make judgements about both texts, evaluate the 'power' of the language, structure and techniques the writers have used, and compare the way writers' views and ideas are presented.

Many candidates demonstrated an ability to compare the passages in reasonable detail offering some comments on language and structure. Better responses began with a comparison of text type and purpose, acknowledging the similarities as well as the differences. These responses made good use of the information given; they recognised that Passage B is less personal and focuses on a place and a number of people, while Passage C takes the form of a more detailed exploration of one man's struggle as a vagrant in New York. Some candidates noted similarities in the way that homeless people are presented in both passages; as proud and independent, and they offered relevant support from the passages to illustrate their points. Some responses tended towards the superficial making obvious comparisons. These responses lacked an overview of the passages and of what the writers are saying about homelessness, more broadly. Some responses would have benefited from greater allusion to points made in the passages to support their comparisons.

Some candidates did not attempt **Question 3(c)** or offered a brief, undeveloped response, sometimes only referring to Passage B.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

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Paper 0627/02  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were fifteen marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- articulate and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures
- use register appropriate to audience and purpose
- make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- analyse and critically evaluate facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- select and synthesise information for specific purposes
- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives.

## General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and Composition. Responses were purposeful, overall, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and most followed the rubric.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passages in their responses. Responses clearly engaged with the question and the reading material; they were able to identify with how pupils' attitudes towards school sports and their participation in them could be achieved. Most responses in the middle mark range tended to select a range of evidence from the passages. Weaker answers drifted away from the material, listed some points simply, or used the material as a starting point to offer a general response to the task.

In the Composition section of the question paper, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of descriptive or narrative writing and in both genres, there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slip into narrative or in some cases was entirely narrative in character; these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail and a more limited time span.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in both genres to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the required formal tone required for a letter to the headteacher was sometimes forgotten. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. Semi-colons were much in evidence but only quite rarely used accurately.



## **Comments on specific questions**

### ***Section 1: Directed Writing***

#### **Question 1**

**Imagine you attend a school or college which wants to improve pupils' attitudes towards school sports and their participation in them.**

**Write a letter to the headteacher giving your views on how this might be achieved.**

**In your letter you should:**

**consider the views and arguments in both passages**

**suggest ways in which attitudes and participation in school sports could be improved.**

**You should use evidence from the two passages you have read to help you answer this question. Remember to write your letter using your own words.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**There are up to 25 marks available for the quality of your writing and 15 marks available for the content of your answer.**

Most responses adhered to the structure for writing a letter; some were mindful of the full question brief that that they were directed to write i.e. to the headteacher giving their own views on how to improve pupils' attitudes towards school sports and their participation in them. In better responses both passages' content was scrutinised, synthesised and evaluated purposefully. They also wrote fluently and used vocabulary to good effect and adopted an effective register. Many, however, simply listed reasons why school sports were important.

#### **The marks for reading**

Good responses followed the bullet points but also synthesised the evidence and adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above band 3. Better responses identified and explored the subtleties of the passages, and explored for example: teenagers are deeply self-conscious about their bodies and changes in teenage bodies make this time particularly embarrassing, the inference that technology drives culture's excessive body-consciousness, scepticism about schools' right to, or wisdom in, not accepting sick notes; the suggestion that academic achievement is or should be worth more than sports; the fact that future Olympic champions can be found in school physical education classes, sporting achievement can foster academic confidence, obesity figures mean schools must enforce physical exercise, choice in sport could be wider to ensure students find something they can enjoy – one key feature of increased participation, competitive sport can teach young people values such as self-control, goal-setting and it can also foster resilience in the face of failure – useful adult skills and attributes.

Better responses were also able to evaluate the arguments to build a compelling case as to how attitudes towards school sports might be achieved. These better responses weighed up and evaluated views in both passages on physical education. The advice given was balanced and well-reasoned. Evidence was derived from the ideas and examples in both passages, developing claims and assessing their implications with clear and persuasive arguments.

The most successful responses assimilated the details of the passages into a whole new piece: it may be impossible to force teenagers to take part in physical education because of deep seated personal and cultural factors; school sport need not be unpleasant and can retain elements of competition; provision for school sports needs reworking and rethinking rather than abandoning completely because there are physical, academic and personal benefits.

This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passages was required for marks in band 5 and above. Where responses simply selected evidence from the passages, marks could not be awarded above band 4.

Responses in the middle range tended to list a range of evidence to support their view. Other responses at this level tended to focus on one passage only. Where there was some commentary on evidence, these remarks were just beginning to evaluate or consider mainly the explicit ideas from the passages.

Weaker responses didn't seem to understand the need to draw on information from the texts or present any evaluation of the arguments presented. These responses were vague; the misconception here seemed to be that the texts were merely a prompt to help generate ideas rather than a source to be used.

Some weaker responses showed an over-dependence on some key phrases in the texts and obvious words and phrases such as 'sick-note culture', 'slackers, shirkers', 'tailor activities to meet their needs' and 'set themselves their own individual targets' appeared frequently.

### **The marks for writing**

25 marks were available for register and audience, choice of vocabulary, the structure of the answer, appropriate use of sentence structures and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Register and audience**

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of their letter.

The majority of responses adopted an appropriate register, addressed the headteacher in their responses and continued to do so throughout, keeping an appropriate and formal tone of voice; these responses structured answers according to the requirements of a letter.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments, cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a response which was clearly derived from the ideas in both passages but was not dependent on their structure and sequence. Some stronger responses did not base their structure around the bullet points. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of reasons for participating in school sports. Some fluent responses with effective sentences did not give full attention to sequencing, so ideas within and between paragraphs were not linked as smoothly as they could be. Moreover, there was some tendency, even among stronger responses, to neglect the use of paragraphs. Many middle band responses used discursive markers which provided effective structure. Some responses were structured according to the bullet points, occasionally devoting one long paragraph to each. Weaker responses lacked a clear introduction and conclusion and ideas were presented in a jumbled way, often without paragraphs. Responses given marks below band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of evidence from one, or both passages, in sequence.

### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in band 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses in band 4 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in band 3 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding band 4 marks and in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

### **Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:**

**Use material from both passages and offer an overview.**

**Try to develop ideas from the passages concisely, using inferences that are suggested, but without drifting beyond.**

**Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for a letter or an article and the register appropriate to audience.**

**Use paragraphs to structure responses.**

**Check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.**



## **Section 2: Composition**

**Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.**

**Up to 16 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 24 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.**

### **Descriptive Writing**

#### **Question 2**

**Imagine you wake up on the first morning of an unusual holiday away from home. Describe what you see and hear, and your thoughts and feelings at the time.**

**OR**

#### **Question 3**

**Imagine you are taking part in a concert or production. Describe what you see, hear and feel behind the stage and in the dressing rooms just before the concert or production begins.**

**(40 marks)**

The first question was the most popular of the two options.

The first question provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to thoughts and feelings experienced were developed. The best responses showed a wide range of vocabulary and imagery evident.

Most responses chose to write from the perspective of a first day of their summer holiday; some did not address the 'unusual' aspect of the question. Better responses gave well defined and convincing details of surroundings for example, the details of their accommodation, the view from their window, observations of other people; they also reflected on their excitement, fears and concerns; for some responses, this was the writer's first time away alone. These responses often used figurative language with success, for example 'nerves were teasing me, threatening freefall ... like a parasite, feeding on my courage'. The writer's wonder and sometimes vulnerability was explored.

Middle band responses tended to list who and what they encountered during their holiday in a routine and perfunctory way which didn't allow for detail, creativity or development.

Weaker responses lacked focus, gave general impressions of experiences of their holiday over an extended period or offered a narrative recounting specific, or unrealistic events.

A common issue for some mid and lower band responses was that, in an attempt to convey the immediacy of a holiday, they began by employing the present tense but then switched to the past.

The second question produced responses across a range of marks and, also encouraged exploration thoughts and feelings and close observation of detail. This question was approached in many ways. The most successful began with a dramatic opening, 'I could feel the floor vibrating' and continued by sharing a journey of emotions until confidence prevailed, 'leaving behind the imprint of my old self'.

Middle and lower band responses were not able to create a cohesive overall description and often included formulaic use of detail from each of the five senses which sometimes led to the details and images being presented in a disjointed way. This approach can weaken the structure and overall picture formed in even the strongest of responses.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected marks awarded. There were some examples of strings of incomplete, verbless sentences and these limited responses to band 3. Some responses wrote descriptively through narrated events and, as a result could access the higher marks, whereas weaker responses used narrative alone.

**Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

**Avoid narrative and remember to provide descriptive detail.**

**Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content. It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.**

**Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.**

OR

**Narrative Writing**

**Question 4**

**Write a story with the title, 'The Return'.**

OR

**Question 5**

**Write a story which begins with the words, 'I had an uneasy feeling the first time I saw our new neighbours ...'**

**There are up to 16 marks available for the content and structure of your answer, and 24 marks available for the style and accuracy of your writing.**

The second narrative question was the most popular of the two options.

**Question 4** produced some reflective written responses. Most chose to focus their plots on some form of life changing event or decision. Better responses were convincing, well balanced and carefully managed for effect.

Some of the most successful responses used subtle twists and turns in the narrative which produced complex and sophisticated writing; appropriate vocabulary was used to set the scene as well as intense character description and well-placed dialogue.

Middle band responses often focused on simple events, for example completing a return journey, return to home after a long absence or returning to a forbidden place. Events in these responses, whilst relevant, were recorded with only brief development.

Lower band responses tended to focus on unrealistic events and lapsed into plots which were too unwieldy to convey events convincingly. These lower band responses used unclear sentence structure, over lengthy dialogue, simple vocabulary and had problems with choosing and staying in the correct tense.

There was quite a range of approaches in response to **Question 5**. Better responses often introduced a dramatic scenario allowing the narrator to create suspense and a sense of climax. One successful response began the initial meeting with the new neighbour, 'When I looked in his eyes he held a dim light and he had a face that knew his age ... where life stops giving and starts taking away', and incorporated evocative description, 'the rocks surrounding began to chatter, the winds began to whisper, and the clouds began to cry.' The most successful responses had a clear plot and were cohesive.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived endings or by less control over the chronology. Responses given marks in band 3 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while band 2 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. Some stories became a series of events which did not really cohere, and some scenarios lacked credibility, and, in a few cases, there was little sequencing or clarity overall. Overuse of dialogue was often a characteristic of these weaker narratives.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to band 3, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used only in weaker

responses but there were many responses where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

### **Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved**

**Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.**

**Plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately.**

**Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.**

**Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic but keep the details credible.**

**Check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.**



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9 TO 1)

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**Paper 0627/03**  
**Speaking and Listening Test**

## **General comments**

Continuing the message from the June 2018 series, there were again encouraging signs that centres are becoming more familiar with the requirements of 0627 Component 3. Most centres completed the administrative procedures effectively and were compliant in the conduct of the test. Assessment was near or at the standard required.

Where there were areas for improvement, the main issues included the lack of a useful examiner's introduction for each test and the lack of adherence to the correct timings for each part of the test.

## **Key messages**

### **Administration – General Points**

It is important that centres carefully read the instructions on the administration of the test. The following guidelines may be of help.

It is very important that the forms sent to Cambridge as part of the sample packet are completed accurately. If a packet is incomplete a delay in the moderation process is inevitable.

Centres should check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD or USB drive before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.

It is very helpful for the moderator where the examiner introduces each candidate's recording by stating the following: the centre's name and number; the candidate's name and number; the name of the examiner and the date on which the test is being conducted. This is a windowed test so the date on which the recording is made must be included to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified dates.

Where there are multiple examiners at a centre involved in the testing, internal moderation is required. Where the total mark for a candidate has been altered because of this internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed. It is unhelpful if only the total mark is altered.

### **Conduct of the Speaking and Listening Test**

When considering candidates' marks, the importance of timings must be appreciated.

Part 1 should be a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes. Please note this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is short, it should be considered whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met. A response is unlikely to meet higher level criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than four minutes.

Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 5. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the examiner steps in to halt any Part 1 talk that exceeds the maximum time allowed. This should not be considered as being in anyway rude to the candidate but as a positive act to prevent the candidate exceeding the time limit. In terms of assessment, if an intervention is deemed necessary, it should be considered whether the candidate has successfully fulfilled the criteria for Band 5 if this level is to be awarded.

Examiners should not interrupt or halt candidates within the time allowed for Part 1. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into Part 2 if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after the maximum time allowed.

If candidates naturally 'dry-up' during Part 1 or show signs of momentary distress (because they have forgotten what they were going to say or lose their flow) the examiner should use prompts without resorting to asking questions.



In Part 2 a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes of discussion is expected. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure these timings are adhered to so the candidate is given the best possible opportunity to demonstrate a full range of skills.

Although candidates can take into the test one cue card containing prompt notes, it should be noted that a reliance on written material in Part 1 is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance.

Each cue card used should bear the name of the candidate and be retained by the centre for six months after the date on which the results are published.

The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in Part 2 is not permitted. When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during Part 2 but there should be no collusion between the examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions only penalise themselves. The discussions should evolve and to do this an element of spontaneity should be apparent.

Equally, the examiner may begin each Part 2 with a fairly generic open question such as 'why did you choose this topic?', but the use of pre-planned questions for the entirety of the Part 2 is not recommended.

The test should only be attempted once in any examination series. Once the test has begun it should not be re-started or interrupted.

It is important that the tests are undertaken within the prescribed test window published by Cambridge for each series. Centres are reminded that as part of the examiner's introduction to every individual test, the full date should be quoted.

The test may be performed in front of a live audience but this audience must be passive and silent throughout both parts of the test. There should be no interaction between the candidate and the audience in either part of the test.

### **Accuracy of assessment**

Generally, centres had applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures. Where there were issues, the following applies:

Timings were not adhered to in one or both parts of the test but the marks awarded did not take this into consideration. A very short Part 1 will most likely not fulfil the criteria for the higher bands. This is equally true if a Part 2 is very short.

One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in Part 2 for short responses to questions which were not of sufficient length or challenge to secure the higher bands. Responses need to be consistently detailed in Part 2.

Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over assessed where the content was factual rather than demonstrating more analysis and reflection.

It is important that the examiners do not over-dominate in Part 2. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions are expected.

### **Approaches to Part 1**

Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the tasks generally took the form of an individual presentation. Generic topics chosen by the centre and not the candidates go against the ethos of the test and are discouraged. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive or the linear to include elements of reflection and analysis to fully address SL1 and SL2. For example, a candidate who presents a talk that describes a recently taken holiday but only includes a day by day account will find it difficult to fulfil the criteria sufficiently for a mark in Band 5 to be considered.

The most successful candidates often display a passion for their topic so the use of tone comes more naturally; however, passion alone is not sufficient. Candidates who prepare a shaped talk with a beginning, middle and conclusion usually demonstrate a more controlled response to content in Part 1.

It seems that some candidates are making greater use of visual prompts such as PowerPoint presentations. So long as candidates are not merely reading from these, then they can make the talks more interesting and livelier, but such visual prompts and aids should not be the main focus.

Topics that worked well include:

- Supporting Leeds United
- Capital Punishment
- Rugby Experiences
- Children and their Idols
- Why I Love Harry Potter
- Does Law Equate to Morality?

Topics that worked less well:

- Room 101
- My holiday
- Football
- Footballers' wages
- Social media
- Body image
- Should cannabis be made legal?
- Future plans

Four to five minutes can seem a very long time to talk if the candidate has not prepared well and has an insufficient depth of knowledge regarding the chosen topic. Room 101 is particularly unhelpful for the candidate especially if the examiner then interrupts during the four to five minutes because the candidate doesn't have enough to say. If a centre sets up the Part 1 to be a series of mini talks on each item placed in Room 101 interspersed with the examiner prompting the candidate, this does not fulfil the rubric for Part 1 and is discouraged as a format.

## Management of Part 2

Supportive examiners ask open questions that encourage the candidates to extend their ideas and reflect on the points made in Part 1. Pertinent, focused and challenging questions work best, giving candidates every opportunity to display their skills.

The question and answer format can result in some stilted Part 2 responses, especially when examiners think of their questions as a tick-list rather than a means to delve deeper or broaden the points made by the candidate in Part 1.

Some candidates were hindered as a result of the listener cutting into a response when it may have been more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening.

It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure each candidate is given a minimum of four minutes for Part 2. Some Part 2 responses were limited because the examiner ran out of relevant questions to push the discussion to the required minimum length, thus disadvantaging the candidates.

## Advice to centres

This is a formal terminal test: prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. through a focus on techniques, research and thought about appropriate topics. Practise methods of presentation and response to questioning in other situations throughout the course as preparation for this test. Adhere to the timings of the test.

Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience and are passionate about. In general, issues and ideas work better than factual topics - the exception being where the candidate has an individual flair or interest.

Ensure that the examiners know the topic titles in plenty of time so that they can think about some of the possible areas for questioning. Examiners should have plenty of questions to ask to push candidates to use the time allowed effectively.

Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.