

November 2013 subject reports

English B

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 28	29 - 44	45 - 58	59 - 72	73 - 86	87 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 27	28 - 46	47 - 60	61 - 74	75 - 87	88 - 100

Higher and standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Higher Level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

Standard Level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The new system of orals appears to have been successful, for the reasons suggested in the May 2013 report, including a simpler system, supported by previous study in class.

Most of the comments below are similar to those made in the May 2013 report, succinctly and only referring to noticeable elements:

Timing: There appear to have been few cases of recordings which ran significantly over the stipulated maximum.

Suitability of photographs: Most of the visual stimuli submitted with recordings were suitable, in that they were (a) photographs, (b) in colour, and (c) fairly clearly related to the chosen topic. A small but noticeable minority were drawings, Photo-shopped collages, even diagrams. While this rarely seemed to affect the candidate's performance except in a few cases, teachers should ensure that the guidelines are being followed.

Suitability of captions: Most photographs were accompanied by a caption. A very few simply stated the Option and the aspect concerned. However, while the majority of captions were suitably stimulating, interesting, provocative so as to awaken the candidate's interest, a few were rather laboured 'exam questions'.

Presentations: The vast majority of presentations about the stimulus photograph were handled at least competently. However, teachers should continue to help candidates to structure their speeches clearly, and to emphasise the structure with sequence markers, cohesive devices, etc.

Teachers' question technique: In general, this remained as under the old course - most good, a few unsupportive, with the weakest consisting of factual 'examination' type questions - although perhaps there was a slight overall improvement in that teachers and candidates usually had common background knowledge on which to draw, enabling prompts such as, "Do you remember when we talked about (X) in class ...?"

Teachers' handling of the interview: The majority of teachers handled the interview as required by the Language B guide, covering appropriate areas in appropriate ways. However, a number of flaws were apparent in a minority of cases:

- A few teachers restricted the Part 2 interaction to asking about descriptive details of the photograph, i.e. little or no widening out to discuss the topic.
- Quite a few teachers failed to relate the aspect of the Option under discussion to the culture of the target language, i.e. to any Anglophone culture. Specifically, the Guide requires that in the Part 1 presentation "The student describes the photograph and relates it to the option and the target culture(s)." (SL p.52; HL p.59). In addition, the discussion in Part 2 should "probe more deeply into the student's understanding of the culture(s) reflected in the material" (SL p.53; HL p.60).
- A very few teachers introduced a mandatory 'second topic', presumably echoing the Part 3 requirement of the old course. This did not necessarily harm, but it sometimes meant that discussion of the photo and the topic was very cursory. A second topic should only be introduced if discussion of the first topic has run out of steam.

Technical: The uploading system seems to have worked well.

Forms: Most centres correctly completed the correct version of form 2/BIA.

Marking: Unexplained differences between the Interactive and Individual orals marks appear to have been less noticeable this session, but have not disappeared entirely.

Candidate performance against each criterion

In general, performance at both HL and SL can be seen as slightly weaker than in the previous two years. At both levels, fewer candidates received the top mark band. That said, the majority of candidates had the basic language skills to maintain an effective conversation with some fluency, and the interactive and intellectual skills to handle discussion of quite complex ideas.

Weaknesses in these skills were most often due to (i) the persistence of L1 interference, affecting grammar, pronunciation or intonation; and /or (ii) a reluctance to contribute fully to the conversation, most probably due to not having thought about the ideas critically and in sufficient depth.

Higher level

Criterion A: Productive skills

Overall language command appears to have been much the same as for previous November sessions, although common weaknesses were a little more apparent. Indicators of this general situation were:

- *Many candidates showed much fluency* although with a noticeable tendency for repeated slips, often in basics. These could be detected even in strong candidates but only affected communication significantly in the very weakest candidates
- *A fairly wide range of structures was displayed.* Most candidates had sufficient grasp of the basics of grammar and syntax to communicate ideas reasonably effectively.
- *Vocabulary range was rich in many cases.* Sophisticated range was evident at times in the Part 1 presentation - although this tended to disappear during the bustle of the Part 2 discussion - while stronger candidates often used idiomatic phrases skilfully.
- *There were some noticeable weaknesses of pronunciation / intonation.* Marked blurring of meaning was apparent among the weakest candidates with marked L1 interference, for e.g. Hispanic or Chinese.

Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

Candidates generally maintained effective communication during the interaction, although the weakest were clearly helped by 'supportive' questioning.

Presentations: Most candidates were reasonably methodical, the majority expanding in reasonably interesting ways on the topic suggested by the photograph, rather than going into detailed descriptions of the photograph, which tended to result in slightly unoriginal handling of 'simple' ideas rather than 'complex' arguments.

Understanding: There were few cases of candidates obviously failing to grasp a question. Candidates were usually prompt to reply.

Quality of response: Most candidates at least attempted to be 'full' in their responses, providing several sentences and as much detail as they could think of; although, on the other hand, relatively few ever tried to be 'active' in their responses and raise new areas for discussion.

Standard level

Criterion A: Productive skills

The general level of language observed was quite satisfactory; most candidates appeared to be able to maintain a reasonable level of communication.

Command: Most candidates communicated very well and maintained fluency despite the lapses made, which in the case of the strongest candidates seemed quite natural.

Fluency: The majority of candidates used a good range of simple to complex structures and seemed to have sufficient resources to convey the message clearly and effectively at times.

Accuracy and range: Many candidates were able to produce a good range of sophisticated vocabulary and structures. In the case of weaker candidates, well-selected photographs that were full of graphic text probably helped generate a varied range of vocabulary, however with many errors and lack of idiomatic expressions at large.

Intonation: There were some cases in which L1 interference and flat intonation patterns seriously obscured meaning.

Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

Overall, candidates were able to express ideas and opinions independently, maintaining a coherent conversation. Weaker ones, however, required further prompting throughout.

Presentation: Although fewer candidates managed to clearly map their presentations, the majority were able to succinctly describe the photograph and link it to both option and topic under discussion. In many cases both simple and complex ideas and opinions were expressed. Very few candidates failed to go beyond the basic details of the visual stimulus.

Understanding: Many candidates were able to grasp the real point of the question, and at times asked for a clarification when they seemed unsure what the question meant, which is considered a good interactive skill rather than a weakness.

Interaction: Most candidates provided prompt and active responses and maintained a coherent conversation. In addition, there was some indication that candidates were prepared to give full answers, to do more than give a simple basic response. At times, that was not the case due to some teachers focusing on factual knowledge which prevented candidates from remaining active as they did not know what to say.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Improving feedback to teachers: As mentioned in previous Subject Reports, "There is concern among examiners that some teachers do not see either the 2/IAF feedback or, indeed, this Subject Report. It is the responsibility of IB Coordinators to make sure that these documents are passed on to all teachers concerned."

Handling of interview procedure: Teachers should pay close attention to the section "Teachers' handling of the interview", above, under 'The range and suitability of work submitted', and ensure that they avoid the flaws described.

Genuinely interactive questioning: Teachers should remember that the interview should consist of a genuine conversation, as far as possible, and should not be considered as an 'examination', in which the teacher asks a list of questions which require factual or 'yes/no' answers.

Teachers "should encourage the student to express opinions, engage in a real conversation as well as lead to further understanding of the topic" in Part 2. In addition, "The teacher should allow sufficient time for the student to respond to questions" without aiming at testing any particular knowledge or background information.

Marking standards: As noted in previous years, teachers should:

- mark the Interactive Oral Activities by the same standards as for the Individual Oral. Significant differences between the two marks entered on form 2/BIA need to be justified in some detail
- where more than one teacher is involved in Oral Internal Assessment, make every effort to ensure that marking is standardised, through discussion, cross-marking, etc.

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

Candidates' performance in the written assignment was good. It seems that candidates enjoyed the task and most centres and candidates were aware of the requirements of the written assignment, which resulted in candidates submitting a wide range of appropriate and sometimes perceptive assignments for assessment.

Like May 2013, it seems that some teachers did not share the assessment criteria with the candidates, and this resulted in inventive assignments that hardly focused on making use of or showing effective connection with the literary work.

Examiners noted that some candidates exceeded the stipulated 600 words, which meant that examiners stopped reading once the 600-word limit was reached. Conversely, some candidates wrote below the prescribed minimum number of words and were consequently penalized as per the assessment criteria. Teachers should advise students to limit their assignment to the prescribed minimum and maximum number of words (500-600) and to write the exact number of words at the end of the task.

There were few teacher-set tasks reported. The Language B guide stresses the fact that the assignment should be the choice of the student with guidance from the teacher. Teachers must not set the tasks for the candidates.

It is worth mentioning that the written assignment in Language B has undergone review. The changes - effective as of May 2015 - are available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC).

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Generally, the assignments submitted were of good quality. Most candidates seemed to be aware of the aims and requirements of the written assignment. The notable difficulty was in producing a rationale that included all the elements specified in the Guide while remaining short and pertinent.

Most candidates made creative use of the literary work, and this was evident in the aims they provided for their tasks and how those aims were achieved. Those included probing into the feelings of a certain character in a work in the form of a diary entry, writing an alternative ending to a text after having highlighted how the new ending is linked to the original work, or continued the story from where the text ended. It is worth mentioning that providing an alternative ending to the literary work was less successful than other 'formats' because candidates mostly concentrated on changing the ending to show personal preference (i.e. not liking the original ending) rather than showing understanding of the original work.

It seems that the text types prescribed for Paper 2 in the Guide largely influenced candidates' choices. Rarely have the written assignment examiners come across text types that were not mentioned in the Guide, and when this happened, it was not always clear what text type the candidate chose. Essays, general book reviews and interviews with authors hardly had a good connection with the literary work, whereas letters, diary entries, personal interviews and interviews embedded in articles worked well. Irrespective of which text type is chosen, teachers should advise candidates to indicate clearly in the rationale which text type they are going to use.

Some candidates concentrated on re-telling the plot rather than choosing a specific focus for their assignment, which generally limited their mark in Criterion B. Re-telling the plot should be avoided; candidates should reflect on their understanding of the literary work and choose specific areas to explore further in their assignments. In addition, assignments that focused on a minor character or incident in a literary work generally did not score well in Criterion B.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual criterion

Criterion A: Language

Overall, language was used accurately and mostly effectively, sometimes with errors that did not obscure meaning. The level of language used in the assignments ranged from adequate to effective, with very few cases that could be described as limited; performance generally fell into the two top levels of Criterion A. There were, however, frequent errors in the use of narrative tenses and prepositions.

Assessing language appropriacy was at times difficult, especially when candidates emulated the style of a character and failed to mention they were copying the style of that character in the rationale. Please note that the use of Pidgin English or very simple sentences / basic vocabulary, when clearly and specifically explained in the rationale and linked to the literary work, is not penalised. If such use is not mentioned in the rationale, only the Criterion's descriptors are taken into consideration when assessing the task.

Criterion B: Content

The most successful candidates related their task specifically to their chosen aspect of the literary work, using details from that text; less successful approaches developed general themes from the texts with little specific reference to particular aspects of the literary work.

Creativity was evident in a large percentage of candidates' work and showed a good use of the literary work, which was translated into the assignment. In many instances, candidates effectively and clearly organized their work, and evidence of skilful planning was demonstrated. Unfortunately, some candidates took 'creativity' to mean 'inventiveness' and created novel texts that departed from the original work. Nevertheless, and because the Criterion's descriptors combine organization of the assignment and use of the literary work, few candidates scored low in Criterion B.

Analytical essays in which candidates provided a general analysis of the literary work did not score well in Criterion B. The assignment is a 'creative' one that should show understanding of the literary work through producing a text that shows understanding of the original work.

Criterion C: Format

Use of text type conventions was mostly appropriate and effective. Inability to score top marks in this Criterion generally related to candidates' failure to use the conventional features of specific text types. For example, some articles were written without titles or sub-headings; diary entries had no dates or resembled essays, rather than narration with reflection; informal letters were written without dates or opening and closing salutations, or the audience was not addressed in speeches.

Suitability of text type to task is important although it is not directly assessed. Some text types do not lend themselves effectively to achieving the aims stated in the rationale. For example, a speech is not suitable for exploring a character's innermost feelings. Therefore, candidates

who did not score good marks in Criterion C generally chose a text type they were comfortable with using without taking into consideration the communicative purpose that suits that type of text in relation to their stated aim(s).

There were a few cases where the produced text type was unclear. Some examiners reported that they could not sometimes tell if the student was writing a monologue, a diary entry, or a soliloquy. Teachers should advise students to state clearly what their chosen text type is to avoid being penalized.

Criterion D: Rationale

Overall, the rationale was not well executed. Most candidates were clear on the text type they wanted to use and the reason why they have selected that text type. However, their aim(s) was/were not always clear or related to the literary work. Some candidates were able to explain how they were going to achieve their aim(s), and made the necessary link between the aim(s) and the selected aspect / details from the literary work when discussing how their aim(s) was/were achieved. The most successful rationales justified choice of text type in terms of how it would provide insight into the literary work as opposed to why the candidate particularly liked that text type. Other successful elements were explaining why a particular style was chosen in relation to the literary work.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be made aware of how linked all the aspects of the assignments are. A clear rationale emphasizes the point(s) the candidate will focus on in the task, and helps keep them on task. A carefully chosen text type helps achieve the aim(s) stated in the rationale, and language that is used both coherently and effectively lends clarity and cohesion to the assignment. Although each criterion is assessed individually, good assignments show clear awareness of the preparation process.
- Teachers should ensure that their students are aware of the requirements of the rationale. The rationale should serve as an introduction to the task. A **convincing** rationale would:
 1. introduce the literary work / provide a short summary of the selected aspect(s) from the literary work
 2. specify the purpose / aim of the assignment in relation to the literary work
 3. explain how this aim was achieved by making the necessary links to the chosen text type and the selected aspect(s) from the literary work
- Candidates should demonstrate understanding of the literary work in their assignments.
- Teachers should advise candidates to choose a specific focus, one that is neither too broad nor too narrow, for their assignments, and to use this focus to demonstrate understanding of the literary work.
- Candidates should be discouraged from including made-up 'facts' or 'events' in their assignments unless they justify them in the rationale.
- Candidates must be advised on the necessity to produce work that is legible.

- Teachers should instruct candidates that an analytical essays is not an appropriate text type for the written assignment.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

General comments

This is the first November session for this component but the results and the examiners' comments show that the candidates performed very well.

There were some very good answers, which used very effective language and gave a thoughtful treatment to the ideas in the sources. The source texts, which were required to be on one of the core topics, dealt with a range of issues relevant to candidates of today, including: teenagers and internet safety, addiction to social media, obesity in childhood, racial discrimination, climate change, cyber-bullying, air pollution, and violence in video games.

It is worth mentioning that the written assignment in Language B has undergone review. The changes - effective as of May 2015 - are available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC).

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Source texts: Most of the administrative issues concerned the source texts, and the following should be noted for future sessions:

- **Topic and length:** The texts must be on a core topic. In this session many were on the Options, and were even labelled as such on form 2/BWA. Each text must be 300 - 400 words. The same texts should be used per group of 12 candidates.
- **Suitability:** To be on the same topic is not enough. The three texts must be usable. Similarly, the texts must be appropriate for candidates at this level - text such as United Nations agency guidelines are very difficult for the candidates to incorporate convincingly because of the content and the legal language used. The source texts should be coherent and the argument should develop logically.

In some cases the texts were from the same website, and then just divided into three. The texts must be from different sources.

- **Poor language:** Most texts were taken from the internet and some of these contained many errors of language, which were then copied by the candidates on occasions. Teachers should choose internet texts with care. Some internet texts make each sentence a separate paragraph. While this may be an accepted internet text layout, it should not be imitated by candidates who are producing other text types such as formal letter or a speech.
- **Submission of texts:** Teachers should enclose three printed texts of the correct length as used by the candidates. A mere reference to a website is not enough. Minimum two printed copies of the texts used should be sent with the scripts.

Copying from the source texts: Some candidates copied whole sentences, or even larger sections, from the source texts without acknowledging them. As stated on p.34 of the Language B guide, 'The student should use the information from the sources to form a new text without copying.' Copying words or short phrases is a sensible strategy especially in the case of lexis specific to the topic, but copying whole sentences is not permitted.

If whole sentences are copied, then the copied sections are not included in the word count and the script is penalised in Criterion A if it then does not reach the minimum word limit. In addition, the 'use of the sources' in Criterion B is unlikely to be 'good' or 'effective'.

Copied phrases and sentences must be acknowledged.

Choice of text type: As in the May session, a wide range of text types was used. Some text types are less appropriate and are difficult to do well. These are the summary, the essay and the diary entry, and it is suggested that teachers do not recommend these.

The summary can rarely have a real-life context and is normally a school exercise to be read by the teacher only. The essay is similarly difficult to contextualize for the same reasons. The most convincing tasks in the WA are set in a real-life context. The diary entry is written for the writer to read and is usually a way of clarifying ideas or pouring out emotion. This limits the communicative aim, and a clear and realistic aim is an essential part of the WA. In addition, the aim should also be an aim set in real life. For example, the stated aim of a diary entry might be to criticise a certain conduct; but what use is this criticism if the only reader is the writer himself?

The most convincing aim is one where the text has a specific communicative purpose. Examples might include a speech to convince listeners to use sustainable energy sources in school or a letter to the town council asking for a new bicycle lane to be opened in the neighbourhood. In such cases both the context and the purpose are clear.

Therefore text types with a clear real-life aim are recommended; these are letters, e-mails, blogs, articles, speeches, reports etc. rather than summaries, essays or diary entries.

Academic Honesty: As with any work that is not carried out under strict examination conditions, there is regrettably scope for plagiarism, and teachers must supervise the candidates carefully throughout the writing process.

The use of a dictionary and reference material is allowed but this does not include the use of electronic material. Further details of permitted reference material can be found in the FAQ section of the Teacher Support Material and also in the Handbook.

Teachers should advise candidates that the use of the internet, or additional source materials, while producing the WA is strictly forbidden. Any passages they include from internet texts are easily recognisable and that the consequences of proven academic misconduct are severe.

Word limits: These were generally well observed this session. Please note, however, that a one-mark penalty is applied in Criterion A to all tasks under 300 words. Examiners count the words of any answer they think may be under the limit. Similarly, if a candidate exceeds the upper word limit, that part of the text which comes after the 400-word limit is not taken into account when awarding marks in Criteria A, B and C. Candidates should therefore make sure that their text is not too long.

The recommended length of the rationale is 100 words. There are no penalties for answers below or above this figure, and the whole rationale is taken into account when marks are awarded.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Language

Most of the work submitted contained effective language for SL, and many achieved the highest mark band. This may partly be explained by the fact that the WA does not take place under examination conditions so the time limit is more generous and dictionaries are allowed. Furthermore, some inaccuracies are permitted in the highest band of 7-8.

There was often a wide range of vocabulary, and it is a sensible strategy for candidates to make use of relevant individual words (but not whole sentences) from the source texts.

Some scripts contained careless slips. A careful proof-reading would have removed these, and as the time allowed is generous there is no excuse for candidates not to do this.

Criterion B: Content

The descriptors make clear what is required here: effective use of the source texts, fulfilment of rationale aims and clear organisation of the answer.

- **Use of source texts:** This discriminated the strong and the weak candidates. There were many instances of the source texts not being used effectively. Sometimes this resulted from a poor choice of texts rather than any lack of ability of the candidate.

Examiners accepted tasks that appeared to mention only two texts if these texts were skillfully used, and other elements of this criterion had been met. However, an attempt should always be made to use all three texts to maximize the potential for achieving higher marks.

Some candidates used the topic as a springboard for their own views. While it is positive to be creative, they must use the source texts before starting on their own version of the topic. First, the candidates must give some of the ideas, information and attitudes of the sources. Having achieved this, they may then be creative.

- **Fulfillment of the aims:** There must be a clear reference to the aims stated in the rationale, and these aims must be achieved. Sometimes the examiner had to hunt through the text in order to find the links between the task and the rationale. Such links should appear clearly.
- **Organisation:** There should be a logical progression of ideas, clarified by relevant cohesive devices and effective paragraphing. The exact format depends on the text type chosen, since different forms of organisation would be expected in different text types. Generally the organisation was fairly well achieved, and there were some answers that did not make full use of the sources but still organised the content well.

Production of a well-structured answer by use of discourse markers, cohesive reference (e.g. pronouns) and paragraphing differentiated the better candidates from the average. Effective paragraphing is essential, yet paragraphing was a weakness in many answers.

It is good practice for candidates to leave a blank line between paragraphs.

Criterion C: Format

The text type chosen by the candidate does not have to be one of those listed for Paper 2. Generally the text types were produced well.

Format refers to the rules which govern the writing of each text type, and these are summed up in the assessment criteria in the word 'conventions'. Conventions include two main areas: the layout (e.g. sub-headings in a report) and the approach (the distinctive style and tone of each text type). So in a formal letter, for example, examiners looked for an address, date and appropriate opening and closing salutations, but also for a formal register and a tone of respect for the addressee.

Criterion D: Rationale

Some candidates produced an incomplete rationale, generally omitting their use of the sources. The rationale should appear before the task and be clearly separated from it. Some candidates gave no clear indication of where the rationale finished and the task began.

The rationale should cover:

- The aims. What is the purpose of the text?
- How the aims were achieved: This may be by the choice and use of text type and by the choice of information used. Sometimes the 'how' was poorly done. A weak example would be, 'I have chosen a diary entry because it is easy for me to write', while effective reasons might be, 'I have chosen a speech so that I can directly

influence the people involved' or 'In my blog I give the most relevant and convincing examples from sources 1 and 2, which are...'.

- The use of the sources: What aspects of the topic are used? What ideas and arguments are taken from the sources? Are the main issues addressed? What attitude is taken? Making reference to the source texts was the main weakness in the candidates' rationales this session.

The candidate could say, 'I have taken X from source A and Y from source B' or could make a less specific link, as in 'I concentrated on the idea of the importance of education in the sources.'

The rationale was one of the weaker aspects this session. Clear links between the rationale and the task are at the heart of this component. The rationale is linked directly to Criterion B, Content, and to the marks awarded there. It is therefore essential for candidates to give it importance and to get it right.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should apply the recommendations made under the 'Range and suitability of works submitted' and 'Candidate performance against each criterion' sections above.

Recommendations tend to focus on what needs improving, but in this session some scripts were excellent. These strong scripts were able to reproduce the ideas, the arguments and also the tone of the source texts. They produced tasks which reflected the seriousness of the issue and which would have communicated effectively in the same context in real life.

Please bear in mind this checklist of recommendations when entering candidates for the next session.

- Choose three source texts of 300-400 words each. Check the English of these texts and make sure that the content of all three texts can actually be used by the candidate.
- The candidates should be advised against the essay, diary or summary text types as these are difficult to contextualise convincingly.
- Candidates should include all the aspects of the rationale which have been outlined in this report.
- Candidates must use all three source texts in their answer and must fulfil the aims stated in their rationale.
- Candidates must observe the word limits of the task.
- Candidates should be reminded of the importance of academic honesty and of avoiding plagiarism.
- Handwriting should be easy to read.
- Teachers should provide paper with wide margins so that examiners can add comments easily.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 23	24 - 30	31 - 37	38 - 44	45 - 51	52 - 60

General comments

The International Baccalaureate wishes to express its gratitude to the 40 teachers who have taken the time to complete the G2 form. Both paper setters and the Grade Award team find teachers' detailed comments important and beneficial.

The teachers' general feeling was that the paper was of a similar standard to that of 2012 although a few teachers thought it was a little easier / more difficult. Many teachers thought that the texts chosen were interesting, accessible to candidates and covered a range of English-speaking cultures / countries. In addition, more than 75% of the teachers who completed the G2 forms rated the clarity of wording and presentation of the paper either very good or excellent. The remaining 25% thought clarity of wording and presentation fair or satisfactory, and none deemed them poor.

As was the case in previous sessions, some candidates failed to write their answers in the spaces provided, while others wrote all their answers on answer sheets instead of in the boxes provided on the Questions & Answers booklet. Please continue to advise candidates to write their answers **inside the boxes** provided on the Questions & Answers booklet.

The areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates

Examiners noted that some candidates still find the True/False with justification questions difficult to handle: some ticked a box but omitted the quotation; some gave the correct justification but did not tick either box; some selected the correct justification but ticked the wrong box. The commonest cause of a zero mark remains to be the failure to follow both parts of the rubric, which requires the correct 'tick' and a quotation that is precise and concise.

Some candidates had difficulty in handling questions that demanded understanding of the whole text, its tone or the author's purpose. Another problematic area was ability to identify references, where some answers were vaguely relevant but hardly specific enough to get the mark.

Examiners mentioned that only a small number of candidates gave the correct answer for Qs 21, 41 and 50. Those questions acted as discriminators and similar questions should be expected at HL every session.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Examiners reported that the exam paper did not present major problems for the majority of candidates: the average candidate was generally successful in selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of question types in the five texts. Some candidates, however, would have benefited from better preparation for questions that required close reading, understanding the meaning of a word or an expression in context, and inference.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Qs 1: These were answered correctly by most candidates; only a few managed to get only 2 out of the 4 correct statements correct.

Qs 2-4: These were mostly answered correctly, with Q3 proving to be somewhat challenging to some candidates, who gave A as the answer instead of G.

Qs 5-7: Average to good candidates seemed to have little difficulty with these questions. Some provided long answers for all three, thus indicating that they were not quite sure of the answer. For Q7, a number of candidates included reasons that were pertinent to general wellbeing rather than therapy in the answer.

Q8: This was answered correctly by a good number of candidates. Still, some thought the writer regarded the choir with pride instead of admiration.

Qs 9-14: The set proved demanding in general. Qs 9, 12 and 13 seemed to be more demanding than 10, 11 and 14. Q9 was rarely answered correctly; most candidates ticked the correct box but provided the wrong justification.

Qs 15-17: Average to good candidates found these mostly accessible, with 17 being the most challenging because some candidates copied the whole sentence that contained the answer instead of only providing the phrase that is similar in meaning to 'make the most of the library collections'.

Qs 18-22: These seemed to be the most difficult set in the paper, with Qs 18, 19, & 21 proving to be more demanding than Qs 20 and 22. Some candidates provided only 'online service' for Q18, 'Copies direct' for Q19, and 'book searches' for Q21. Candidates are advised to write exactly and specifically to whom or to what the underlined word or phrase refers.

Qs 23-26: Average to good candidates had little difficulty with this set. The most common wrong answers were A for Q24 and B for Q26.

Q27&28: These were answered correctly by most candidates. Some, however, included 'rhyme' with 'rhythm' in the answer to Q27 and consequently lost the mark.

Qs 29-32: Average to good candidates seemed to have little difficulty with these questions. There were instances where providing a wrong answer for Q29 meant that the subsequent 3 questions were also answered wrong. Candidates are advised to read the paragraph closely and understand its overall message before they determine which phrases go in the gaps.

Qs 33&34: A number of candidates lost the marks for these questions because they copied the whole sentence in which the required phrase(s) appeared from the text, which invalidated the answer. Candidates are advised to determine carefully what the 'parameters' of the required phrase are and to include only that phrase, not the whole sentence, in their answers.

Q35: This proved to be of medium difficulty to almost all candidates, who sometimes provided C as one of the correct options.

Qs 36-38: Average to good candidates seemed to have little difficulty with this set. Some provided E as the answer to Q36. Candidates are advised to consider the context in which a word is used before determining what that word means.

Qs 39-42: Average to good candidates found little difficulty in these questions, with Qs 39 & 42 proving to be little more demanding than the rest. Candidates are advised to read the options carefully before they determine what the answer is.

Qs 43-47: The set proved to be accessible to a good number of candidates, who sometimes got all 5 correct, but more often than not they missed either one or two, with Qs 45 & 46 proving to be the most 'elusive'.

Qs 48 & 52: These were answered correctly by a good number of candidates. Q50, however, was rarely answered correctly, for candidates either missed 'usually', which was required to justify 'in general', or copied the whole sentence instead of providing the exact phrase.

Q53: At HL, candidates should be able to read carefully and to understand the overall purpose of a written text. Some candidates lost the mark for this question because they thought that the main purpose of the text was to show the superiority of the electric car.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be made fully aware that, in the true/false questions, the justification must be a **quotation** and not a paraphrase. In addition, teachers should point out that the crucial words in the quotation used to justify a true or a false statement must never be omitted.
- Teachers should stress to candidates that a careful reading of the instructions is essential, and that judicious consideration of the requirements of each question must be exercised to determine when a problem could result from offering either too many words or too few.
- Teachers should advise candidates to carefully study the context before answering vocabulary questions.
- Handwriting remains a critical issue. Teachers should advise candidates to pay extra attention to the legibility of their responses. Furthermore, in questions where a letter is

required, candidates MUST write their answer clearly, for unclear answers will NOT be awarded the mark. Among ambiguous answers were C/G, E/F, E/L and A/D.

- As mentioned earlier, teachers must draw candidates' attention to the importance of writing their answers in the boxes provided. When an answer is written outside the box, the candidate must indicate where the answer appears (for example, 'please see attached paper').
- Teachers are advised to spend more time discussing how context affects meaning. This will help prepare candidates for reference and gap filling exercises, and indeed most question types, in future examinations.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 14	15 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 33	34 - 39	40 - 45

General comments

The International Baccalaureate would like to thank the teachers who have taken the time to complete the G2 Form on the OCC. Although this number has slightly increased compared to last year, all teachers are highly encouraged to submit their comments and brief explanations, which are invaluable to both the paper setters and the Grade Award team.

Most respondents agreed that the paper is of an appropriate difficulty level and that the presentation of the paper was either very good or excellent. Approximately 63% of the teachers who had completed the G2 Form found the paper of a similar standard to that of November 2012, while 25% believed it to be a little easier. Clarity of the paper's wording was deemed very good or excellent by 88% of respondents, and many considered the texts accessible and interesting to candidates.

As was the case in previous sessions, some candidates failed to write their answers in the spaces provided while others wrote all their answers on answer sheets instead of in the boxes provided on the Questions & Answers booklet. Please continue to advise candidates to write their answers inside the boxes provided on the Questions & Answers booklet.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Many examiners reported that one problematic area was identifying the correct words or phrases from the text. Many candidates wrote either a complete sentence or more than two

words for Q18 and Q22, for example, when only one word was required in both, which resulted in a zero mark.

Another problematic area is close reading and identifying references. In Q24, many candidates wrote “students” only, which was too vague to be awarded a mark. Similarly, a good number of candidates failed to identify “35% of British adults” as the required reference in Q23, and wrote “British adults” only.

Illegible handwriting resulted in many candidates losing marks for several multiple-choice questions. Some candidates even provided two answers, one outside the box and one inside it, without clearly crossing out one of those. Please continue to remind candidates that letters must be written clearly inside the box and that they should clearly cross out the answer that they do not want to be considered for assessment. Failure to do this will result in a zero mark.

There has been a significant improvement this year in handling the True/False with justification question. Still, a good number of candidates continued to tick the correct box but provide extraneous details that resulted in losing the mark. Others ticked the correct box and wrote the justification but with essential parts missing. Candidates are to be reminded that both the correct tick and the brief **quotation**, not paraphrase, must be provided to attain the mark.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The four texts in this component presented no substantial problems for the majority of candidates. The average candidate was generally successful in selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of question types in all texts. Some candidates, however, would have benefited from better preparation for questions that required close reading, matching words with their meaning as well as identifying references.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Q1: Most candidates identified at least 3 out of the 4 statements. It was noted that D was generally the one some candidates missed.

Qs 2-4: Candidates provided a number of reasons for Q2 that were generally the writer’s opinion rather than the reason why buses in Vancouver had bike racks. Qs 3 & 4 were answered correctly by most candidates.

Qs 5-7: These were answered correctly by the majority of candidates. The most frequent wrong answer was H for Q6.

Qs 8-10: Many average to good candidates found these accessible. Frequent wrong answers were E for Q8, A for Q9, and C for Q10.

Qs 11-15: Average to good candidates seemed to have little difficulty with this set. However, as discussed earlier, it is necessary to provide both the correct tick and the appropriate brief quotation to get the mark. Qs 12, 13 and 15 seemed to be the most challenging as candidates failed to provide the correct tick for Q12, provided the wrong justification for Q13; and missed “I learnt” in Q15, which is an integral part of the justification.

Qs 16 & 17: Average to good candidates seemed to have little difficulty with these questions. A common wrong answer was A for Q16.

Qs 18-22: These proved to be the most demanding in the paper. Many candidates failed to identify ‘interestingly’ as the word required for Q18, wrote the general “many students raised their hands” as the answer for Q19, failed to identify the ‘striking pattern’ in Q20. Candidates should be advised to read the question carefully before they attempt to answer.

Qs 23-26: Some average to good candidates were able to answer these correctly. The most demanding questions were 23 and 24 as candidates provided the generic “British adults” and ‘students’ respectively for those questions.

Qs 27-30: This set proved to be easy in general, with Q29 as the most demanding.

Qs 31-34: Many average to good candidates found these accessible. Qs 31 & 33 appeared to be the most demanding in the set. Candidates should be reminded that skimming the paragraph and understanding its main idea will help them identify its correct heading.

Qs 35-38: Most candidates answered these questions correctly.

Qs 39-42: These proved accessible to most candidates although some provided “links” as the answer to Q40.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers should advise candidates to provide complete justifications in True/False questions and that crucial parts in the quotation should never be omitted. Additionally, the use of dots (...) in the justifications should not be necessary if the quotations are, as required, brief.
- Teachers should impress upon candidates that long answers or over answering rarely, if at all, results in more marks.
- Candidates should practice the skills needed for the examination like vocabulary and language enrichment skills, anaphoric referencing, and subtitling.
- Candidates must write their answers clearly, especially in multiple choice questions, and must avoid writing two letters without clearly crossing out one. Unclear answers will not be awarded the mark. Among ambiguous answers were C/G, E/F, E/L and A/D.
- Teachers are advised to focus on close reading techniques and referencing: two essential skills that must be continuously reinforced in class.
- Teachers must continue to draw candidates’ attention to the importance of writing their

answers in the boxes provided. When an answer is written outside the box, the candidate must indicate where the answer appears (for example, “please see attached paper”).

- Teachers should familiarize candidates with the common types of questions and with appropriate strategies to answer each.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 13	14 - 20	21 - 26	27 - 33	34 - 39	40 - 45

General comments

This is the first time that the new form of Paper 2 has been used in the November exam session. No significant problem with any of the questions was detected by the examiners, and the feedback from teachers on the G2 forms was that the level of difficulty of the paper was 'appropriate'.

Overall performance by candidates suggests was sound. At the top end of the range, there were some very sound, intelligent responses, but often a little lacking in precision in the command of language or of exact handling of the task. At the bottom end, there were a few candidates with marked errors in language which significantly affected meaning, as well as a few candidates who lost many marks by simply not doing what the question clearly required.

One effect of the new form of Paper 2 seems to be that the candidates wrote less, rather more thoughtfully. It is likely that having two tasks instead of one seems to have inspired more careful planning of time and effort. There was no indication that candidates had insufficient time to complete the tasks.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Recurrent language errors: As regularly noted in previous reports, there continue to be noticeable errors in grammar, phrasing and usage, often in recognisable forms consistent with L1 interference. Typically these involve poor agreement in the use of pronouns, weak control of tense structures, and inaccurate prepositions.

Weaknesses of sentence structure: The 'run-on' sentence which continues for half a page or more through a long series of commas were less frequently observed this year. However, there were many candidates who seemed to restrict themselves to short simple sentences, correctly handled.

Handling of argument: Reports for the last two years have drawn attention to weaknesses in the way that arguments were constructed: a typical comment was "... interesting individual ideas were poorly linked to those arguments that had gone before or came after – the links of the chain didn't actually linkup..." This problem of the logical organisation of ideas was noticeable in some candidates' responses to Q3, and more significantly in Q4 (the speech about money in sport) where candidates often presented strongly-held views in rambling or repetitive ways. HL candidates should be capable of constructing the clear explanation of coherent ideas.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Text types: As noted last year, the vast majority of scripts clearly made some attempt to reproduce the appropriate text type, in terms of basic conventions whether of layout or of register. It is interesting that most candidates seemed to have some control of the quite complex skill of register. It appears that candidates had observed, and learned from, the use of language on the internet; the 'blog' (Q2) was often convincingly and realistically handled, with a title or heading, and lively address to the readership.

Understanding of task: Few scripts could be considered as essentially 'irrelevant' to the task; almost all appeared to deal with the main thrust of the question, and most covered the sub-elements required (e.g. in Q1 - "why and how minority languages should be maintained"). The general clarity of the question-phrasing in this paper undoubtedly helped - for instance, the Section B Q6 stimulus was clear and simple, and the only candidates who failed to respond adequately to the 'city / country' dichotomy were the very few who understood 'country' to mean 'nation in general'.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Section A

It appears that Q3 (letter to the editor about computer and health) was the most popular choice, closely followed by Q2 (blog about the dance). A few opted for Q4 or Q5, and Q1 (article about minority of languages) was the least popular, being selected by around 5-10% of the candidates.

The popularity of Q2 and Q3 may be due to the text types. There was some evidence that a lot of the candidates who attempted the Q2 task were familiar with blogs, either because they read blogs or because they may even write their own blog. Similarly, it was evident that many candidates had been taught the basic format rules of a formal letter, and in addition are likely to have much experience of computers and their consequences.

The relative unpopularity of Q1 may be because many candidates had no ideas about minority of languages, and so sensibly avoided this question. However, the candidates who did attempt the question generally seemed well-informed, and there was evidence that the issue of minority languages (or at least cultural diversity) had been discussed in class.

Question 1: Cultural diversity – magazine article

The few candidates who attempted this usually did it quite well. Most presented reasonably clear ideas about 'why' minority languages should be maintained; although fewer had clear ideas about 'how' this should be achieved. The handling of the 'article' text type appeared to be slightly better than the handling of the 'article' task in November 2012 - there was usually a title and some attempt at an interesting opening paragraph to attract attention.

Question 2: Customs and traditions – blog

A wide range of performance was observed: the strongest scripts had a lively, interesting approach, and provided all necessary information lucidly; while the weakest were simply unfocused anecdotes about 'something that happened on holiday', with much narrative and little reflection. The question's command term "describing the experience" was most usually interpreted as telling the story of the "recent travels" leading up to the moment of the dance; there was relatively little detailed description of the dance itself. The requirement to describe "what you thought about it" was often handled quite well, with some thoughtful comments about traditional cultures and customs. The 'blog' text type was reproduced surprisingly well in many cases - with a title, some direct address to the readership, and a lively, expressive style.

Question 3: Health – Letter to the editor

Most scripts focused correctly on 'health problems' (mentioning specific problems such as damage to sight, lack of exercise, etc), although some obviously capable candidates said little about health problems as such, concentrating on general causes or consequences of using computers (importance of IT in the modern world or social consequences such as isolation among young people). The text type was handled with varying success: most scripts had something like an appropriately formal register, but many lacked appropriate opening and closing salutations.

Question 4: Leisure – Speech

The majority of scripts were clearly enough a 'speech', with some direct address to the audience maintained throughout; although a significant minority made a token address to the audience at the beginning ("Dear classmates") and then were simply 'essays'. Most scripts concentrated correctly on the 'negative' angle required, and presented reasonably coherent points of view. However, in many cases the progression of ideas was vague and/or rambling, with limited sense of a methodical development of arguments; and it was rare to find a script that paid attention to any form of counter-argument for rebuttal. Such problems with the quality of organised argument were mentioned in the November 2012 Subject Report also.

Question 5: Science and technology – Email to a friend

Most candidates handled correctly the personal address expected for an email, and managed a change in tone between pleasant chat at beginning and end and more business-like explanation of the main point. The description of the IT fair was generally quite sound and clear, and 'enthusiasm' and 'encouraging the friend to attend' were almost always expressed effectively. At times, there was a lack of required focus on the task; a few ignored the

'information technology' instruction, and talked about advances in technology in general (e.g. cloning, alternative energy, etc).

Section B Personal Response

The vast majority of candidates addressed the key issue indicated by the stimulus, and expressed a point of view about it. The weakest were not really capable of presenting any kind of 'reasoned argument', as the Language B guide requires, in support of their point of view. This problem relates to widespread difficulties mentioned under 'Handling of argument' entry (see above). The strongest candidates often discussed intelligently how 'success' should be defined, relating this to the key issue, although some obviously strong candidates got carried away with defining success and forgot to mention 'city versus country'. Unfortunately, in such cases there was a problem of clear relevance to the stimulus.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Performance in this session suggests that teachers should pay particular attention to :

- conducting a campaign to eliminate common recurrent errors in language (as described under 'Recurrent language errors', above)
- practising the lucid handling of argument, i.e. thinking out methodically and then organising in a clear sequence a set of reasoned arguments
- exploring with the candidates the varieties of 'address to audience', specifically in relation to the 'speech', the journalistic 'article' and the letter to the editor.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

General comments

This was the first examination for the new curriculum and the topic based Paper 2 examination questions. In general, candidates performed very well and seemed prepared. As in the previous Paper 2, it is essential for the candidates to use effective and accurate language, to cover all the required parts of the task and to use the text type appropriately.

Many thanks to the teachers who have taken the time to complete the G2 Form on the OCC. 5 of the 8 respondents considered the paper of a similar standard to that of November 2012, while the rest deemed it either a little easier or a little more difficult. Clarity of wording and the

presentation of the paper were considered good to excellent by the teachers who completed the form. All teachers are highly encouraged to submit their comments and brief explanations, which are invaluable to both the paper setters and the Grade Award team.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates and in which candidates appeared well prepared

Criterion A: Language

The handling of language was generally effective. Examiners reported that the majority of candidates were of the proficiency expected at SL. As always, some answers were impressive in their use of language, while at the other end of the scale, there were candidates who made very basic errors in verb forms, tenses, subject-verb agreement and punctuation. Better able candidates were able to produce complex structures clearly and use a wide range of vocabulary both accurately and effectively. Examiners also mentioned many errors resulting from L1 interference, which obscured meaning at times.

Word limits: It was pleasing to note that the majority of candidates observed the word counts required. In the few scripts that did not meet the lower limit of 250 words, a penalty was applied in Criterion A as stipulated in the Guide. In all doubtful cases the words were actually counted, and so candidates must make sure that they do not fall short of the limit by a few words. It is worth mentioning that there is no penalty for exceeding the upper limit of 400 words, and the whole answer is considered when awarding marks. However, a very long answer is rarely a good one as the chances of making more repetitions and basic mistakes increase.

Criterion B: Message

The content was generally relevant, and it was the development of ideas and the overall organisation that distinguished the better answers. Some questions asked for two aspects to be covered, such as 'describing the event and how similar or different it is' in Q2 and 'describing the problem and suggesting ways' in Q3. Candidates should address each of these required topics clearly; otherwise, scripts are marked down on relevance of ideas in Criterion B. Underlining the required aspects on the question paper may help to remind candidates of what elements they should cover.

In weaker scripts there was no logical argument revealed. An argument should proceed step by step, and the points should be supported by evidence. This was required particularly in Qs 1, 2, 3 and 4. This ability to produce coherent argument distinguished the best answers which developed the argument in separate paragraphs and supported it with specific points and examples rather than talking in general.

Paragraphing: Many candidates did not use paragraphs at all, which affected the message communicated and thus resulted in marking the relevant scripts down in Criterion B. Good paragraphing is one of the most effective ways of structuring a text, and it should clearly

separate one idea from another. It is also good practice for candidates to leave a full blank line between paragraphs.

Criterion C: Format

Examiners commented that candidates produced the conventions of the text types required generally well although in some cases speeches read like essays, letters missed an address and an appropriate opening or closing remark, and diary entries had no dates or statements to round off the entry. Q4 was the least popular one, but it was generally managed well by those who chose it.

Candidates should remember that format entails more than producing the correct layout or form in general and that tone and register are also significant. For example, in Q1, the speech is to be delivered at the next board meeting which necessitates a formal register with a serious tone adopted. In Q3, many candidates successfully included a formal opening and closing remark with an address given in the beginning but tended to use a patronizing tone and an informal register in the middle.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The diary entry was the most popular option, which was followed by the New Year celebrations article, the letter to the chairperson and the speech respectively. The least popular option was Q4 which was attempted by less than 5% of candidates. Candidates should consider both the content and the text type when deciding which question to answer.

Question 1: Cultural diversity – Speech

A good number of candidates failed to use the expected tone and register when addressing adults in a board meeting and restricted their audience to only students or both students and teachers, using a semi-formal to informal register. Still, almost all candidates who attempted this question managed to take a clear position either agreeing or disagreeing with the proposal of using only English on campus and produced the general conventions of speech writing: addressing audience in the beginning and thanking them in the end.

The best answers not only produced a persuasively argued speech, but also maintained seriousness and attempted to leave a clear impression in the end. Many scripts also kept contact with the audience throughout the speech, for example by use of pronouns 'you' and 'we' and by direct address. The very best answers used speech rhetoric, such as direct questions to the audience.

Question 2: Customs and traditions – Article

Good answers covered both aspects of the task: describing the event and stating how similar or different it was to the one celebrated in candidate's own country. Weaker answers did not cover both aspects, and thus were marked down on relevance of ideas in Criterion B. In other answers, no reference to an English-speaking country was made which resulted in candidates describing how they celebrate the New Year in their own country.

It was also important to produce an article. This means a title and an engaging introduction and conclusion. The best answers also used a lively style appropriate for a school newspaper along with effective paragraphs and cohesive devices.

Question 3: Health – Letter

In this question examiners looked for a persuasive letter in which both the description of a certain teen health problem and ways in which the money could be spent are clearly addressed. The question was generally answered well, and there were some authentic and convincing letters produced with specific examples and supporting details used to convince the chairperson. Some candidates, however, addressed only one of the aspects mentioned above or failed to provide clear suggestions on how to spend the money to address the health issue described.

It is worth mentioning that many candidates did not use all the aspects of a formal letter (address, date, opening and closing salutations). Some did not adopt a consistent formal register and a respectful tone; they began correctly with 'Dear Sir/Madam' but then later used contractions such as 'I'll' or 'It isn't' or some chatty language with a tendency to give orders.

Question 4: Leisure – Pamphlet

As mentioned earlier, this question was the least popular among the five options. This task requires providing specific advice on how to stay healthy and safe during the one-week expedition mentioned with possible dangers and risks outlined. The few candidates who attempted such a question generally managed to demonstrate a clear sense of 'pamphlet' format, expressed in imaginative layout, with a lively address to audience and short paragraphs, headings/sub-headings as well as contact details provided in the end. Weak scripts failed to provide clear advice on how to survive the expedition and lacked specific examples on the possible dangers and risks to be faced.

Question 6: Science and technology – Diary entry

This was by the far the most popular option. Many candidates produced authentic and reflective diary entries in which a vivid description of the events was provided along with personal reflection on the experience accompanied at times with a conclusion drawn from what was learnt during the two days.

Weaker candidates only recounted events without any reflection made. Some candidates produced two separate entries to reflect the events of each day, which was handled quite well. Almost all candidates maintained a lively tone and an informal register, but some answers failed to include a date and/or provide a statement to round off the entry. It is worth mentioning that even in a diary entry, paragraphing and cohesive devices are essential to deliver ideas clearly.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- **Answering the question:** It is essential to answer all parts of the question. It is

suggested that candidates read the question at least twice, underline essential aspects, and then read the question again half way through the examination to ensure they are still going in the right direction.

- **Format:** Candidates should use the layout and approach demanded by the text type, but beyond this, they should imagine their text in the real-life situation indicated by the question. For example, would the letter persuade the chairperson to adopt the suggestions made?
- **Handwriting and spelling:** Some scripts, though thankfully few, were almost impossible to read. Handwriting needs practice well before the examination. Proof-reading can also correct many spelling mistakes. The last 10 minutes of the examination are vital, and a final careful check can often achieve a higher mark.
- **Poor paragraphing:** Some responses were just a single paragraph. Other scripts with paragraphs did not have the breaks in logical places. Correct paragraphing is something that examiners invariably check on, and thus teachers are highly advised to constantly stress that in class.
- **Punctuation:** Many scripts included sentences over five lines long, which were, in fact, several sentences joined by commas. As with paragraphing, this may be L1 influence, and again, the conventions of writing in English should be taught.

The aim of written texts is to communicate effectively, and this effectiveness depends on the impression that the text makes on the reader. Thus poor paragraphing, handwriting, punctuation and spelling assume an importance beyond their immediate communicative value.