ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 1123/11
Writing

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Key messages

* Candidates are advised to read the question carefully, especially where a bullet point comprises more than one element, e.g. *when* and *where* in **Section 1** bullet point 1.
* Candidates are advised to use any remaining time to read through their response and correct any errors.
* Candidates are advised to avoid memorising sections of responses, particularly those involving 'florid' vocabulary and clichés/proverbs. These are unlikely to address the precise question asked, and as such may not be successful.
* A small minority of candidates are still including (sexual) violence within responses. This is inappropriate for the task(s).
* Candidates are advised to structure their response(s) in accordance with the question. In **Section 1** some responses strayed into narrative when addressing the second bullet point.

General comments

* There was some high quality writing during this series; the main features of which were a clear structure, and relevancy to the task.
* In **Section 1**, almost all candidates adhered to the genre conventions of a formal letter, including for example, an appropriate opening phrase or two and a sensible salutation. Some letters were inappropriately informal however, and overly narrative in style.
* Responses did not always address all aspects of **Section 1** effectively; the first bullet point presenting the greatest challenge for candidates. The second bullet point was almost always addressed but often in a somewhat narrative style – incorporating features such as direct speech – and including irrelevant details. The third bullet point was generally addressed, even if only to mention a single action to improve the situation.
* **Section 2** responses were generally relevant, with little evidence of any misunderstanding of the task requirements. Candidates generally chose from across the range of questions; narrative was a very popular choice.
* There were very few short answers or unfinished responses, suggesting that overall, candidates managed their time well.
* Candidates should avoid writing very long responses as these are rarely well-structured and often contain a large number of errors, as candidates perhaps lose focus and/or become fatigued. Poor handwriting was also a feature of lengthy responses. Candidates are encouraged to focus on quality rather than quantity.
* Candidates should be encouraged to write clear sentences, varying length for effect, where appropriate. All candidates should use any remaining time once they have finished the tasks to check their spelling, grammar and punctuation, in order to avoid any comprehension-impeding errors.
* Most responses displayed an ability to use past tenses accurately and consistently, in **Section 1**. A few narratives in **Section 2** revealed some insecurity in use of tenses, switching between past and present.
* Weaker responses often imposed strain on the reader, typically as a result of inaccurate pronoun use and/or a lack of subject/verb agreement.
* Inappropriate language was rare; candidates are reminded to avoid slang unless used in direct speech and where appropriate for the task.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

In **Section 1** candidates were asked to write a letter to the Editor of a local newspaper about an incident where a motorist almost knocks a cyclist off a bicycle and to suggest improvements to reduce the chances of further incidents.

Bullet point 1: *'when and where the incident took place'*

Most responses addressed both aspects of this bullet point, with varying degrees of success. Almost all stated when the incident took place with many referencing an exact date/time. The location of the incident was sometimes missed with a surprisingly large minority quoting directly from the question (*'walking along a busy road'*) rather than stating an exact location. Stronger responses set the scene by describing the general context in which the incident occurred, e.g. *during rush hour, at a notorious junction.*

Bullet point 2: *'what exactly happened, including how the car driver was to blame'*

Most responses included a description of the incident as well as how the driver was to blame. Descriptions ranged from a simple lift from the question (*'almost knocked the cyclist off the bicycle')* to convoluted narratives and back story about the cyclist and/or driver. The driver was often to blame due to inappropriate mobile phone use or alcohol/drug abuse. A sizeable minority included extraneous detail about the car.

Bullet point 3: *'what you think should happen to improve the situation'*

This point was generally answered well with almost all candidates offering at least one simple suggestion, often based around cycle lanes or surveillance cameras. In responses that referenced alcohol/drug abuse or mobile phone use, suggestions to improve the situation often focused on solving these wider issues, with varying degrees of success. Many responses offered several sensible solutions such as creating greater separation between motorists and cyclists, more traffic police and educational campaigns to raise awareness. A number of candidates mentioned the environmental benefits of encouraging cycling, effectively weaving global climate concerns into their response. A very few slightly misunderstood the task and asked the Editor to improve the situation rather than offering their own suggestions.

Most responses were organised into paragraphs, included an appropriate opening and a short overview of the content of the letter; conveying a clear sense of **purpose** and **format**. Most also ended with an appropriate salutation and a concluding sentence (*'I hope you take my ideas into consideration', 'Looking forward to your response'*). The majority of responses were also written in a suitable **register**. A small minority of responses, in which register and format conventions were not adhered to, included irrelevant dialogue/details which in turn, affected the overall **tone**. Stronger responses maintained control of **tone** and **purpose** throughout.

A very small minority of responses lost focus on the task and strayed into a narrative of an accident. These included lengthy dialogue and rather gory details.

On occasion, meaning was impeded where candidates used unusual vocabulary incorrectly. Equally, the use of clichéd idioms and memorised sections was rarely successful as it tended to interrupt the flow of candidates' writing.

Section 2: Description

Task 2: *Describe a place where you go to relax and enjoy some free time.*

The standard of responses varied. Stronger responses tended to include descriptions of a place as well as candidates' response to it, and generally contained lyrical language and a firm grasp of descriptive writing skills. Weaker responses typically described a holiday location, and how the candidate spent their time in this location. This often resulted in a rather list-like response with little actual description.

Argument

Task 3: *Some people say that we learn more outside the classroom than inside it. Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your point of view*

This was a fairly popular choice and most candidates demonstrated a solid grasp of appropriate structure; comparing and contrasting opposing viewpoints in clear paragraphs before stating their own position. There were some highly skilled responses with good use of illustrative examples to support a stated viewpoint. A small minority of candidates developed both sides of the argument but neglected to include their own opinion. Some candidates wrote as if they were delivering a debate speech using openers such as, '*For my debate topic today,*' and '*I am here to explain why…*' This did not necessarily weaken their response.

Task 4: *What are the best and worst things about being a teenager? Give reasons and examples to support your point of view.*

This was a popular choice. Stronger responses delivered a balanced argument, comparing and contrasting the best and worst things with effective use of suitable phrasing (*on the other hand, some might say, we must also bear in mind*). Many candidates displayed great knowledge of the negative sides and cautioned against the risks of teenagers making poor choices. The turbulence of being an adolescent was therefore at the forefront and positives tended to be outweighed by negatives. Weaker responses tended towards uncontrolled rants about lack of agency and a desire to be an adult. This topic clearly evoked strong reactions; most responses were engaged and often passionate without this impacting negatively on structure or tone.

Narrative

Task 5: *Write a story which includes the words: 'Two years after they last saw each other, she was amazed at how confident he seemed.'*

This was a popular choice and almost all candidates were able to integrate the phrase effectively, many choosing to use it as the conclusion to their narrative. Relationship troubles proved a common theme, with stories around painful relationship breakdowns most frequent – here, the phrase was typically used to signal a resolution. Another common theme was that of a shy and socially awkward student later becoming successful. Stronger responses incorporated accurate and consistent use of tenses, a wide and apt vocabulary, and dialogue to good effect. Weaker responses switched between past and present tenses, showed an insecure use of punctuation – often resulting in lengthy sentences, and particularly noticeable with respect to direct speech – all of which impacted on clarity, subsequently imposing a strain on the reader. Candidates are encouraged to consider the plot of their narrative and to make a plan before they start to write: a minority of responses were unfocused and lengthy with little sense of structure.

Task 6: *Write a story in which a promise plays an important part*

Overall, candidates' responses were effectively and appropriately structured around a promise and the important part it played in the narrative. Many candidates chose to use the promise fulfilled (or not) as the conclusion to their narrative. Narratives about footballers were popular, for example a promise to sign for a club. These often lost focus however, incorporating lengthy descriptions of actions within matches. A few responses verged on inappropriate material with the protagonist being subjected to violence or sexual assault due to promises being broken. Candidates are urged to avoid inappropriate subjects. They are also encouraged to consider the narrative arc of their subject before starting to write.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12
Writing

Key messages

- In **Section 1** it is essential that candidates include all three of the bullet points.
- Attention should be given to the **full** requirements of each bullet point in **Section 1**; often there is a word, such as **and**, in bold type, to indicate two parts to the bullet point.
- The use of correct tenses and agreement would improve the work of the majority of candidates.
- The use of capital letters continues to cause problems; often candidates use them when not necessary or omit them when they are essential.
- The lack of and misuse of definite and indefinite articles limits the fluency of a response considerably.
- Correct punctuation (full stops, commas) and a more varied use of punctuation (colons, semi-colons, exclamation marks) would raise the level of most responses.
- The use of learned idioms (such as *raining cats and dogs* and *in the pink of health*) can sound old-fashioned and candidates need to be exposed to more modern, as well as accurate, expressions.

General comments

The overall standard of candidates this year was comparable to those in previous years. The very best candidates achieve a high standard in their use of language, most particularly with their vocabulary. This year Task Fulfilment in **Section 1** was more variable in accuracy and quality than in previous years. As far as the use of language is concerned there is still a need for candidates to check their work thoroughly, particularly their use of capital letters, punctuation in titles and speech and consistent use of tenses. Sentence separation was slightly better this year. This year, in **Section 2**, all of the titles were popular and there was an increase in the number of candidates attempting the Argument titles. Time management for the vast majority was very good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to imagine that there were problems with the public transport in their area. They had to write a letter to the Editor of their local newspaper to explain how unhappy they were with the situation. The majority of candidates responded very well to the **purpose** and **situation** as they were able to use details from their locality. In **Section 1** candidates this year had to be aware that in order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points a perfect answer required:

- details of the problems with public transport in their area
- an example of when **and** how they were affected
- what they thought should be done to improve the situation.

As last year, for **bullet point 1**, a few very weak responses relied almost entirely on lifting (or giving a close paraphrase of) the opening two sentences from the question. They said only that there were difficulties but did not say what they were. More successful responses were able to specify public transport such as buses, trains, taxis and rickshaws and to explain that there were many problems to do with the organisation and running of these. Such problems included poor schedules and the services being late or early. The vehicles were often old and unreliable and so broke down; one candidate spoke of *An ancient 50-year old bus, never serviced, moving at a snail's pace...* Buses were considered unhygienic and poorly maintained, usually with broken seats and inadequate air-conditioning. Candidates felt that drivers often crammed passengers into these overloaded vehicles and made the situation dangerous. Finally, there were many mentions of harassment and theft on public transport. Some candidates mentioned only one problem, even though the

word *problems* was in the plural. Some did not specify problems to do with public transport and spoke more about traffic conditions and driving (private transport) or they spoke about problems with the transport infrastructure (roads etc.). While these ideas gained some credit, they did not quite carry the weight of specific difficulties in public transport; at best, they were useful only in supporting more specific comments about public transport.

When addressing **bullet point 2**, stronger candidates realised that the bullet point required an example and that a letter to a newspaper would benefit from something specific Therefore, they gave a precise date or an occasion which clearly stood out as significant (*..when I was doing my O level English Paper..*). Candidates who relied on more general terms, such as *Once/some time ago/previously*, lost the urgency that such a letter demanded. The great majority of responses gave details showing how the incident affected them with, for example, the dire consequences of being late for an examination or to work. Sometimes the outcome was much more alarming and one candidate witnessed a fist fight when the passengers were '*paralysed with anxiety*'. As with bullet point 1, incidents about private transport and infrastructure (usually pot holes in the roads) were less relevant than incidents directly relating to buses, taxis and rickshaws.

Some responses merged bullet point 1 and 2 but these risked only implying how they personally were affected by the problems they described.

In **bullet point 3**, the solutions to the problems followed naturally from bullet point 1. Training drivers to do their duty fairly and expertly, running accurate schedules, upgrading the vehicles (especially with effective air conditioning) and introducing harsher penalties for wrongdoers were all seen as necessary to improve the conditions of public transport. Some responses outlined some or all of these and introduced infrastructure improvements such as new roads and bridges as a back-up, whereas those responses which referred only to such infrastructure improvements (*re-routing the traffic*) added very little to the discussion about public transport. Occasionally, only one solution or improvement was given (e.g. *new buses*), even though there were many problems, and it was difficult to see how the one solution could address all that was wrong. A few responses were not planned adequately, with too much time spent on addressing bullet points 1 and 2 and and not enough on bullet point 3. The weakest responses gave no suggestions for improvement but said only that *the government should do something.*

A slight weakness across **bullet points 1** and **3** was the tendency to list large numbers of problems and improvements at the expense of some elaboration on points. For example, some responses gave as many as six problems but gave them as bare problems (e.g. *Drivers are not good at their job*) whereas the more convincing responses gave fewer problems but were able to elaborate so as to make the problems very real and more convincing in this type of letter (e.g. *Drivers are not good enough because of their poor driving and their lack of consideration towards elderly passengers*).

Generally, there was a very good awareness of **purpose** and **situation** and candidates were admirably clear about what they were doing in this text. The proper **audience** for this task was the newspaper Editor but also the readers of the newspaper. Virtually everyone was aware of this, although many candidates expected the Editor to solve the problems rather than just raise awareness and provide publicity in an article. The **register** was very well maintained this year and kept properly formal and polite by most. Several examples of appropriate technical language (*catalytic converters* in particular) were useful in rooting the report in the correct context. Most responses provided an appropriate **format** for a formal letter. Most responses correctly ended the letter with *Yours faithfully* or *sincerely*: relatively few signed off with inappropriate, informal valedictions such as *Regards*.

Candidates generally followed the structure provided by the bullet points for their organisation, together with a very short opening and closing paragraph. There was some over-use of narrative in the response to **bullet point 2** when a concise and clear account was required.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for *Section 1* and captured the polite, formal **tone** and approach very well. **Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when the improvements were suggested in **bullet 3**. There were very few short scripts indeed in *Section 1* and even fewer examples of no response.

Linguistically, most candidates produced a convincing piece of work. Spelling (*schedule*, *punctual*) and punctuation were generally satisfactory but *public transports* was common. Linking words like *moreover*, *furthermore* were often used a little randomly. Paragraphing continues to improve in the *Section 1* task. In this text, there was some weakness in the use of tenses when weaker responses switched from the present state of public transport to a specific example in the past. There was a confusion between *complain* and *complaint*.

Section 2 – Composition

Question 2

Describe two places near where you live which are beautiful in different ways.
(Remember you can describe the places, the atmosphere and what makes the places so special.)

More candidates attempted the descriptive title than in previous years. Most candidates were successful in evoking two locations which they knew very well; they were also very good at choosing locations which were different and added variety to their responses. Very few responses referred to only one place. Locations varied hugely but very popular ones were local parks, historic buildings and markets, all of which demonstrated a sense of pride. There were thoughtful reflections on how the impact of globalisation has not yet reached the Old City with its shophouses, shrines and street traders. All this was contrasted with mountain regions with glacier-fed lakes, secluded from society, and local people dependant on their livestock farming, all with breath-taking views. One response presented a poetic description of the beach near Karachi, contrasted with an historical palace, now a museum, in the Old Quarter of the city, with a timeless quality. There were a significant number of locations which were linked to family memories and in particular places which had been enjoyed with grandparents. One unusual response described two locations (a butcher's shop and a fishmonger's shop) from the point of view of a cat. Whatever the interpretation, these responses adequately suggested how they were *beautiful in different ways*.

Less successful responses were mainly narratives about a visit to the places rather than a description of the places. Weaker responses had difficulty in determining the correct tense.

Linguistically, successful responses evoked an atmosphere by close description and the use of the senses, rather than relying on words like *interesting*, *attractive*, *peaceful* and *beautiful*. Many responses included wide ranging and precise vocabulary: *preposterous*, *penurious*, *rectitude*, *destitution*, *prodigious* and *ameliorate* were just some of the words used to good effect.

Question 3

What are the most important qualities a friend should have? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

Candidates were generally very much in agreement about the qualities that made a good friend. Loyalty, kindness, generosity, honesty, a sense of humour, a good character as well as a good personality and the ability to be available even in tough times were the most valued attributes. Some responses made brief but effective use of contrasting bad qualities to emphasise the point. Overall, the responses were extremely mature in their appreciation of the qualities of a friend and many candidates gave good examples of their own friends. This year, both of the argument titles were characterised by developed arguments. Responses included reference to personal illustrations to convince the reader. When choosing an Argument essay candidates should be sure that they have plenty to say on the topic as well as the language ability to make and develop their points. One way of achieving more complexity and depth is by introducing personal anecdotes and illustrations as stated in the question and this will give depth and life to the topic.

These arguments benefited greatly from careful planning with candidates using separate paragraphs to highlight different qualities.

Question 4

Is being a brave person always about using physical strength or are there other ways of being brave?' Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This title was quite popular with candidates. Most responses appreciated that bravery could come in a show of physical strength and there were many examples of someone fighting off an attacker, or soldiers in war or sportsmen and women. Nevertheless, candidates universally believed that bravery came in many other forms than merely physical strength. They appreciated that bravery could be mental as well, with many examples of people having to overcome bad fortune, medical issues and betrayal by friends.

There were many sophisticated and developed arguments including one response which advocated mental and emotional strength/bravery, but admitted that facing an intimidating opponent could be difficult. Standing up for one's rights was very important, but the writer still regarded physical presence (and being muscular and strong) as important and not to be under-estimated and was envious of such people and those courageous people who are not afraid to stand in front of an audience. Another interesting angle on the question came from a candidate who considered non-violence (e.g. Gandhi) as bravery. Standing up to oppression/occupying forces and fighting against tyranny was admirable, but those who strive to implement alternatives are even braver. A few candidates developed this idea in talking about mental strength being translated into confidence – usually the confidence to speak out against what they saw as wrong in society.

Question 5

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'He spoke in such a nervous way, she thought he was going to change their plan.'

This was the most popular option. There were some excellent stories where the candidates managed to include the given sentence smoothly. There were many themes, from the uncertainty of marriage proposals to planned bank robberies. The best stories involved suspense and shock, including one about a search for a missing mother, which dissolved into horror, with several chilling, heart-stopping moments. Several stories featured betrayal of trust by someone very close to the protagonist through cunning manipulation, an example being the thwarting of an elopement. The best narrative responses are always characterised by an understanding of narrative structures, ambitious vocabulary, control of tenses and usually by a variation in tone through the sparing use of dialogue. Weaker responses included repetition of ideas, confused tenses and an overuse of simple grammatical forms and vocabulary. Most responses would have benefited from more variety in their punctuation, provided it was used accurately. With specific reference to dialogue, two points are worth remembering here. First, if dialogue is added it should have a purpose – perhaps to show character in some way. Second, dialogue should be properly punctuated, not least because it shows a skill as well as making communication clear.

Question 6

Write a story in which a map plays an important part.

There were some equally successful stories in response to this title. There were many which included road trips and many which included treasure hunts. There were several stories which included the loss of a phone signal and many in which a map was left to someone or found in a will. Many stories contained humour, including the amusing story of the (not very well-off) boy who brought a map of the hill country and was mocked by his friends for not having a cell phone with GPS. However, when they later entered an area with no network, he became the hero.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 1123/21
Reading

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Key messages

- In approaching a reading paper, it is necessary for not only the two texts, but also for every question, to be read very carefully. Reading and re-reading until both passages and questions are fully understood should allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding of what is required, and to identify where the necessary information is to be found. Every question directs them to the paragraph or area of text where they will find the relevant material on which to base their answer.

- In all answers, candidates are advised to avoid the use of ellipsis (…) to shorten a response. This is most evident in **Question 1(a)** and **Question 2**, although it is occasionally seen elsewhere when a candidate chooses to answer using words from the text. Casually abbreviating in this way increases the risk of information essential to an answer being omitted.

- In the summary **Question 1(a)**, many candidates showed that they have learnt to focus on the selection and expression of the main, or overarching, points within the text. Some, however, include irrelevant examples and extensions of those points. These can detract from an otherwise competent response to **Question 1(a)**, and can influence performance on **Question 1(b)**.

- The use of candidates' own words in **Question 1(b)**, while not essential to the task, often allows for greater fluency. Candidates are advised that piecing together bits of the text, linked, not always appropriately, by adverbial connectives, may result in a summary which is not easy to follow.

- Candidates are recommended to avoid lengthy or unnecessary introductions and conclusions in **Question 1(b)**. Similarly, writing at length when moving from the advantages of one type of shopping to the advantages of the other, can introduce several lines of irrelevance. In many cases, a simple 'However' would suffice, in order to concentrate on the concise and relevant ideas which were selected for inclusion in response to **Question 1(a)**.

- Candidates are encouraged to practise recognising the difference between opinion and fact in non-fiction passages. The question asks for opinions given in the text, i.e. by the writer. Once identified, the opinions should be offered without straying into excess which might turn an opinion into a statement.

- In *Section 2*, understanding of both literal and inferential meaning is required. Some candidates found that responding to the detailed demands of the questions on the second passage was challenging. In **Question 10**, in particular, there was not always a clear distinction between what is required by the 'meaning' and what is required by the 'effect' of the given text. Further practice in the approach to these types of writer's craft questions would be beneficial. Candidates are advised to focus on the straightforward, literal meaning under 'meaning' and to demonstrate a clear ability to differentiate between that and the 'effect' of the writer's use of particular words or images.

General comments

The majority of candidates attempted every question. Incomplete scripts were extremely rare, all candidates seeming to engage with the tasks and the texts. The passages were generally accessible to all, with some vocabulary and expressions stretching stronger candidates.

With the focus on giving main points only in **Question 1(a)**, the space available in the answer booklet should be sufficient. Using the areas around the edges to squeeze in further information should not be necessary and sometimes causes illegibility. If any response exceeds the space available and has to be completed in a further booklet, candidates should ensure that they identify the original question number, part, and – if appropriate – the section which is being continued. In **Question 1(a)**, for example, there was a need to explain whether additional points were advantages of 'out-of-town shops and shopping' or of 'in-town shops and shopping'. Without such identification, points cannot be credited.

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages: the first was a non-fiction text and the second was fiction. The first passage, 'Shops and shopping in modern times', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their ability to read for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary **Question 1**, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the selection of content points from the text of 'Shops and shopping in modern times' and 10 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. **Question 2** also tested candidates' ability to read for ideas; in this case, to distinguish 3 opinions from the surrounding facts in 3 different paragraphs of the text. 3 marks were available for this question.

The second passage, 'Aunt Joan', tested candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their ability to select appropriate quotations, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. Some questions were clearly challenging for candidates, and careful consideration in approaching them was evident in the best responses. The remaining 25 marks for the Paper could be gained here.

In **Question 1(a)** it was extremely rare to find information positioned in the wrong section and almost without exception, candidates wisely adhered to the suggestion in the rubric that they might find it useful to use bullet points for their notes. This allowed clarity of expression in most cases and candidates scored well in this question, generally, with many marks of 9 or more and a good number reaching the full 12.

The carefully selected points of **Question 1(a)** were mainly used to best effect in **Question 1(b)**. However, a minority of candidates did choose to add irrelevant material, using their own knowledge and experience of the shopping world. It should be remembered that candidates should base their summaries exclusively on material found in the given text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks; candidates were asked to identify and write down the advantages of out-of-town shops and shopping, and the advantages of town-centre shops and shopping, as outlined in the passage. The summary was to be based on the whole text, and candidates were required to write their answers in note form, and were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration; these given points were not rewarded with a mark. Candidates generally identified the advantages in the first part more accurately than those concerning the advantages of town-centre shops and shopping. In both parts it was necessary to avoid anything which was merely an example or extension of a main point, while at the same time ensuring that words essential to making that point complete were included. Examples of such expressions are given in reference to individual points, below.

Excluding the provided content points, there were 14 further points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 12, for one mark each. Most offered the points in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text. Those few who presented lengthy copies of the text sometimes ran out of space and stopped short of covering the required number of advantages. The best responses were expressed concisely, almost invariably using the suggested bullet point approach.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 described the advantages of out-of-town shops and shopping and apart from the first, which was given, there were seven points which the candidates could make. Just one of these was in Paragraph 1 and concerned the experience of driving to a retail park. Candidates needed to give only one of the ways in which the text described the experience: the lack of congestion, or little traffic on the roads; the whole trip being pleasant; or the fact that customers could arrive in a relaxed state of mind. There was no need to offer all three possibilities and a comparison with town centre traffic was unnecessary.

Four content points could be found in Paragraph 2. The first was that retail parks have many stores, or that it is possible to buy a wide range of goods in one visit. Most candidates gave the point in one or other of these ways; some, however, offered a direct lift of lines 7–9, unnecessarily including both alternative answers as well as the given examples of the many stores. The majority realised that, for the second alternative, it was essential to include the idea of 'in a single trip'; without that, the idea of there being 'many' stores at an out-of-town centre was lost. Similarly, the next advantage – that there are comfortable temperatures in these places, or that the weather is not an issue there – had to include the fact that the shops are in a mall or under one roof. Stores being bigger was the next point in the paragraph and an optional way of presenting this was by referring to the greater variety of goods available (because of the space for them). The comparative adjectives of the text ('bigg*er*' or 'great*er*') had to be used, to make the point precisely, and most candidates did so. The last advantage suggested in this paragraph was to do with 'longer opening hours'; those three words – again including the comparative form, in 'long*er*' – were the simplest way of making the point; it could also be made with the text's repetition of the idea that they are open late and every day. Saying only that they were open 'late' was not sufficient to mirror the text idea; it was necessary to add '*and every day*'. The complete lift of lines 14–15 ('These big stores often have longer opening hours than shops in towns') was acceptable.

Paragraph 3 contained the last two advantages of this section: in their briefest note form, these were lower prices (or cheaper goods) and multi-national companies. These two points were distinct, the first being the result of bigger stores and more shoppers; the second suggesting the appeal of large retail parks for multi-national companies to operate there. Those who copied the last three lines of the paragraph which focused on the manufacturing potential of global companies, and the resulting potential for producing cheaper goods, were straying from the precise advantages of out-of-town shops and shopping.

The second section of the summary asked for the advantages of town centre shops and shopping and, excluding the given point, there were a further seven content points in Paragraphs 4–6. From Paragraph 4 candidates could suggest two advantages, the first being that a town can achieve its own individual character by its type of shops. The passage then referred to the features of university towns, seaside towns, and those in agricultural areas being reflected in their distinctive range of shops. It had to be made clear that the character of a town comes from its *type* of shops or that its features are reflected in its *type* of shops and this detail was only recognised by the strongest-performing candidates. The second advantage was identified in almost all answers: that income is derived from occasional or planned events, or that people come to a town for such events and spend money there. The idea of 'income' was necessary to make the point, and indeed it was included in the majority of responses.

Paragraph 5 contained four more points: that lively, busy or vibrant towns give residents a sense of civic pride i.e. pride in their town; that more money is spent on things other than the items bought or that people might increase income by having lunch or coffee there; that there is a social dimension to town centre shops and shopping or that they (or cafés and restaurants) allow people to relax or take time out; and that small businesses flourish in town centres. Civic pride had to come from *lively* town centres; people having lunch had to *increase income*; the shops or cafés or restaurants had to *give the opportunity* for people to relax; it had to be *small* businesses which had the advantage of flourishing or doing well.

The final point could be found in Paragraph 6 and emphasised the 'local' position of town centre shops as well as the possibility of shopping 'locally'. This could be expressed in various ways, for example: 'local people can walk/can cycle/take public transport' or 'it is easier for local people to get there' or 'there might be local public transport'. The only other acceptable answer was based on the final sentence of the passage, the inference of which was clearly that 'you don't need to have a car'. This was very occasionally offered by those who saw the inference in 'By comparison, getting to a retail park usually requires a car…'

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the advantages of out-of-town shops and shopping, and the advantages of town centre shops and shopping, as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150 and 180 words (the first ten of which were given) and to use their own words as far as possible in a piece of continuous writing. Marks were awarded for producing a relevant, well organised and easy to follow summary. The most commendable efforts were from candidates who expanded the relevant notes made in **Question 1(a)**, skilfully synthesising the material without repetition, mere examples, or unnecessary supporting detail. As suggested in Key messages, above, although the use of own words is not compulsory those who did use them, together with appropriate devices to link the main ideas, achieved a fluency which was indeed 'easy to follow'. Such responses showed an understanding of appropriate use of adverbial connectives such as 'However', 'Nevertheless', 'Moreover', 'Hence'. The ability to use original complex structures and careful punctuation all added to coherence. Others wrote more simply, often relying accurately but somewhat repetitively on 'and' or 'also' to link their ideas, with just the occasional suitable adverb link. Such responses were satisfactory in their achievement of fluency. Those who attempted to synthesise sections of the text using commas or chose inappropriately from a memorised list of connectives performed less well on coherence.

Very few candidates chose to lay out the advantages of the two types of shopping by describing an advantage of one and then of the other, attempting to jump between in and out-of-town shops and shopping throughout the summary. This unusual approach often resulted in a rather disjointed and less fluent style than those summaries which respected the organisation of **Question 1(a)** i.e. considering all the advantages of out-of-town shops and shopping, followed by all the advantages of town centre shops and shopping.

Under relevance, candidates who copied chunks of the passage were occasionally able to cover a sufficient number of the main points. However, these tended to be the responses which included unimportant detail such as 'most out-of-town retail parks are boring and soulless' or 'town shops often close early in the evening and possibly one day a week'. On occasion, expansion of a main point included further irrelevance, as in: 'with no need to keep the weather in mind when preparing for a shopping trip – simply get in your car and go!' The better responses succinctly expressed the advantages of both out-of-town and town centre shops and shopping, moving effectively from the first type to the second with a simple 'on the other hand…' or 'however…' by way of introduction. Some of the less secure summaries relied on overly lengthy introductions, such as 'Although the out-of-town retail parks have a lot of advantages, that is not to say that town centre ones don't also have them as well.' Similarly, some responses included unnecessarily long concluding statements, such as: 'All in all, both methods of shopping are very effective and useful to both the consumers and the economy as you can see but it's up to you really which one you prefer.'

All but one or two candidates attempted this question, most completing the task to an appropriate length.

Question 2

Question 2 continued to test 'Reading for Ideas'. Here, candidates needed to re-read Paragraphs 2, 4 and 5 and to give one opinion from each. A mark was given for the identification of each opinion, whether copied directly from the passage or presented in the candidate's own words. The first opinion could be found at the end of Paragraph 2: 'There is nothing more relaxing than late night shopping.' Where candidates continued the lift to the end of the paragraph, this was acceptable. This statement should be recognisable as a personal opinion because the idea that late night shopping is the most relaxing thing there could be is not something with which everyone would agree.

In Paragraph 4 the opinion was that 'out-of-town retail parks are boring/soulless'. Once again this is not something which everyone considers true. Thus, the statement is the writer's opinion and not the statement of absolute fact he makes it out to be. This was probably the least well-attempted part of **Question 2**. Many offered 'A town might achieve its own individual character by its type of shops.'

'It's wonderful to be part of a happy/settled community' was the opinion in Paragraph 5, and one which many candidates gave correctly even when they did not recognise the other two. A popular incorrect answer was 'Many people in our modern world need to relax.'

This type of question continues to challenge many and among a number of candidates' scripts, it was the one question which was not attempted. Candidates are reminded that the opinions must be taken from the given paragraph in the passage and should not be their own opinions, for example: 'I think it's a great idea to shop out of town.'

Another misguided approach to this question was to offer a summary of the paragraph content as an 'opinion' e.g. 'Paragraph 4 talks about how their prices are low and internationally recognised.'

The use of ellipsis, mentioned in Key messages, above, was seen on occasion in responses to **Question 2**. Such an omission resulted in the non-expression of an opinion in some cases, for example: 'It's wonderful … settled community'. We need to know what it *is* that is wonderful.

Section 2

In dealing with a narrative text, candidates will often encounter less familiar vocabulary and will have to show an understanding of figurative language and inferred as well as literal meaning. With frequent reading and discussion of a variety of fiction, all students would benefit greatly in terms of answering questions in this section and in enjoying even more fully the books they read, more widely.

Question 3

Question 3(a) was a straightforward, literal comprehension question asking why the writer regularly visited Aunt Joan. The answer was that she was lonely, or that she lived alone. The great majority were correct in their answers, some acceptably adding that the writer thus went to chat to her. Given on its own, 'to chat' was not credited; that was the result of the writer recognising her aunt's loneliness.

The answer to **Question 3(b)**, which asked in what way the writer indicates that Aunt Joan was 'frequently confused', was that she was rational at times, but sometimes saw the world 'through a mist'. Many responses were correct, but a number of responses showed a misreading of the full stop in the first line – 'Aunt Joan was frequently confused. Because she lived alone and was, I thought, often lonely …' – and gave the alternative answer to **Question 3(a)**: 'Because she lived alone'. Thus, the same answer was given for both parts of the question.

Question 4

The answers to **Question 4(a)** lay in Paragraph 2, where Aunt Joan tried to steal an item in the market. Candidates needed to pick out the two things Aunt Joan did which showed that she knew she was doing something wrong. A number of candidates recognised that it was the way she '*nervously* looked over her shoulder' and then '*stealthily'* dropped the bracelet into her pocket. Those two words ('nervously' and 'stealthily') were necessary to suggest that she knew she was doing wrong. Any added description of her 'haughty' attitude, her attempt to walk away or the way she flung the bracelet across the stall, when challenged, spoiled the focus of the answer.

Question 4(b) referred to how Aunt Joan walked away 'with a haughty expression, her head held high' and asked candidates to give one word used later in Paragraph 2 which continued this idea. The word was 'arrogant'. A significant minority did not follow the instruction to give *one* word and offered 'arrogant gesture' or, occasionally, the whole sentence including the required word. There were others who offered 'haughty', a word from the question rather than from 'later in the paragraph'.

Question 5

Another literal question, **Question 5(a)** asked why the writer thought that the objects she found in the cupboard 'were clearly unused'. The 'objects' are then listed and we are told they 'all had labels still attached'; this is what suggested that they were unused. Very few candidates missed this fact.

Question 5(b) required candidates to infer from what we already knew of the situation. From the quotation, 'It had clearly been going on for some time', candidates were asked to say what 'it' refers to. Many candidates sensibly considered how the cupboard full of unused objects linked to something the writer suspects had been going on; their answers, that it was Aunt Joan's stealing, or shoplifting, were correct. 'Pickpocketing', however, was not acceptable, given the unused nature of the goods. Those who offered a one or two-word answer such as 'theft' or 'her stealing' had also clearly seen the link and gained the mark.

Question 6

Question 6(a), another inferential question, asked candidates what mistake the writer made when fetching Aunt Joan's glasses for her. The word 'mistake' did not appear in the paragraph, but the writer says that pulling open the third drawer (when her aunt had said the glasses were in the second drawer) 'was not intentional'. Thus, in opening the third/wrong drawer, she had made a mistake. The vast majority gained the mark here.

Question 6(b) was the first to require the use of candidates' own words. They were given the sentence: 'It was not intentional, but the sight almost paralysed me; for several seconds I thought I would choke.' They had to describe in their own words the reaction of the writer to what she saw in the drawer. It was necessary, as is usual in an 'own words' question, to identify the key ideas in the quotation; those ideas lay in the words 'paralysed' and 'choke', which suggested her reaction. Some candidates saw 'not intentional' as important to the idea, but that was not relevant to the writer's 'reaction' to what she saw. This was a demanding and discriminating question where only the strongest-performing candidates were successful; the most common answer – that Mary was 'shocked' – did not adequately consider the given words. We understand she was shocked, because of her reaction, but the reaction itself has to be described. A good number of candidates were able to describe how Mary was 'almost paralysed', giving answers such as: 'What the writer saw made her freeze' and 'The sight made her unable to move' or 'She was left motionless'. The idea represented by 'I thought I would choke' was less frequently attempted or, in some instances, misinterpreted, as in: 'she started to cough' or 'she was speechless'. More accurate interpretations of that word were seen however, e.g. 'she felt like she could not breathe' or 'it left her gasping for air'. Many candidates expressed the correct idea for one or other mark, but not both. In only the strongest responses were accurate descriptions, based on both ideas, given: 'the writer could not move and she thought that she would suffocate' or, 'she was so shocked that she stopped moving and struggled to breathe'.

Question 7

In answer to **Question 7(a)** candidates had to say why Aunt Joan went into the bedroom. There was once again an inference to be drawn, this time from the writer's words 'I had no concept of time passing'; she had obviously been in the bedroom for longer than seemed necessary to find the glasses. It was the passage of time which was to be understood as the reason for Aunt Joan going into the bedroom. Some candidates thought she was 'checking up' on Mary, or that 'She had seen the open drawer', but the more accurate responses referred to the writer 'taking so long to get the glasses', or to her 'taking quite a while in there'. Weaker expressions of the same idea were acceptable e.g. 'Mary was long in the room.'

In **Question 7(b)**, the majority of candidates correctly identified the emotion which Aunt Joan was feeling, when, as the question quoted, 'Aunt Joan hissed'. The verb used is suggestive of anger, or fury. Those candidates who wrote that it related to weaker emotions of 'annoyance' or 'feeling upset' lost the force of the word. Answers which included another reasonable emotion, together with the correct idea of 'anger', were acceptable, for example: 'anger and embarrassment' or 'she was furious but afraid'.

Question 7(c) also required an answer in the candidates' own words. The sentence given, 'A promise is a promise, but a crime is a crime' represented the dilemma which the writer faced. The question asked candidates to 'Explain **in your own words** why the writer thought she had a dilemma'. Here, candidates had to understand that what was to be explained was not the meaning of the word 'dilemma', but rather what dilemma was represented by the 'promise' as well as the 'crime' or 'theft' referred to. The answer lay in the fact that Mary had said that she 'won't tell anyone'; she felt she had made a promise. On the other hand, what Aunt Joan had done in stealing jewellery was wrong; it was a 'crime' or 'theft'. A number of candidates used the key words of the quotation and could therefore not be credited, as in: 'she made a promise to keep a secret but her aunt had committed a crime'. Some who opted to explain a dilemma in general terms gave answers such as: 'the writer didn't know what she should do'. That was true, but such answers omitted the specifics of the dilemma. An example of an effective response which gave those specifics was: 'The writer had a problem because she had given her word to Aunt Joan that she would not tell anyone her secret, but she also knew stealing was wrong and she had to report it to someone.' Even more succinctly expressed and equally strong was: 'the writer had vowed not to tell anyone but stealing was illegal'. Many candidates were half-way there with their responses, explaining one half of the dilemma and thereby scoring one of the two available marks. e.g. 'Her aunt was stealing things' or 'this was because she didn't know whether to tell on her aunt'. A common mistake occurred where candidates appeared to have moved too far forward in the text from the given sentence and shifted the focus to the writer's surprise at seeing the jewellery as Aunt Joan's family was not rich. Such answers did not relate at all to the quotation.

Question 8

Question 8 was in two parts, asking **(i)** what the writer was looking for in Aunt Joan's bedside cabinet and **(ii)** why the drawer was empty. The answer to the first part was based on the fact that Mary had found jewellery in her Aunt's bedside cabinet the previous day; now she 'took the opportunity to look in her bedside cabinet *once more*'. From this, it could be inferred that she was looking to see if that jewellery was still there. Almost all candidates responded correctly here, clearly having understood what the writer had seen before and was now looking for once again. It was necessary to say that it was the 'jewellery', or the 'valuables', or the 'rings, bangles and necklaces' which she was looking for, to distinguish these valuable items from the 'cheap objects' she had found in the kitchen. More generalised responses, such as 'stolen objects' or 'the things that Aunt Joan had taken' could not be credited. The answer to the second part could be found by reading on in the paragraph where candidates would learn that Aunt Joan 'had taken the precaution of hiding the jewellery elsewhere'. Many candidates offered the lift accurately to gain that second mark; others scored it by stating in their own words that she had moved or hidden the jewellery in a different place**.**

Question 9

Question 9, the multiple-choice synonym question, assesses candidates' understanding of five words from the text. Candidates had to decide which of four alternatives had the same meaning as the word from the passage. Candidates are strongly advised to base their decisions by taking each of the four options back to the context and comparing them carefully. Such checking is crucial in this type of question as some of the options have quite different meanings depending on the context within which they appear. The clearest method of indicating the chosen word is by circling the letter next to which it appears. If candidates change their minds, however, they should take care that they do not leave more than one letter circled.

Candidates were most successful on **Question 9(a)**, where 'improved' was correctly chosen as the most appropriate synonym for 'enriched', on **Question 9(d)** where 'foolishly' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'fondly' in this context, and on **Question 9(e)**, where 'large' was correctly selected as the most suitable synonym for 'capacious' in this context. **Question 9(b)** was less successfully dealt with, 'luck' being a frequent choice; in the context of valuable jewellery the only possible choice was 'wealth'. **Question 9(c)** proved most difficult; 'threatening' was the correct answer, but 'deep' and 'strange' were selected most frequently by candidates.

Question 10

Question 10 tested understanding of the writer's craft. A very small minority of candidates avoided the question altogether. In each of **Question 10(a)** and **Question 10(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of a sentence as used in the passage, and the effect of that sentence as used in the passage.

Question 10(a) directed candidates to Aunt Joan's frightened words to Mary, the writer, when she realised that her niece had discovered the jewellery she had stolen ('"They'll take all my pretty things away and then they'll take me away."') For the meaning, candidates need to provide a straightforward, literal explanation of the sentence. The strongest responses demonstrated recognition of the fact that the 'pretty things' referred to the goods Joan had stolen – in particular the jewellery – and that if Mary reported her crime, these would be taken from her and she would be arrested, imprisoned or punished in some way. Most candidates were able to give both elements of the meaning to score the mark, in answers such as: 'she will be arrested, sent to jail and the stolen items will be confiscated'; 'if the writer reports her, the police will have to take the stolen jewellery and lock her up'. Where one of the two elements was missing, meaning was incomplete and the mark could not be awarded e.g. 'they are going to take all her jewellery away'. The second element was sometimes given in response to the effect and could not be credited.

The effect of the sentence in the context of the passage could be expressed in relation to the writer, the reader or Aunt Joan. There is a general effect here of sympathy or pity; reader and writer alike feel sorry for Joan; Aunt Joan herself sounds weak, sad, frightened or helpless. Alternatively, its effect was to elicit sympathy from Mary and stop her from reporting her crime. All of these effects were valid. The effects most frequently offered were Aunt Joan's fear, e.g. 'this makes Aunt Joan seem petrified' and sympathy, e.g. 'it makes the reader sympathise with Aunt Joan and feel pity for her'.

Some of the weakest responses suggested an inability to distinguish between meaning and effect; this was most evident in cases where the meaning was split across the two parts of the question, as in: Meaning: 'They will take away the stolen items.' Effect: 'After this they will take her to prison as it is a crime.'

Question 10(b) proved to be the more difficult part of **Question 10**, with only the strongest-performing candidates gaining both marks. The given sentence was Mary's question to herself when she found the cabinet drawer empty: '"I wonder if it was there in the first place or did I dream the whole thing up?" I said to myself.' The writer's 'I wonder…' means she was questioning herself or was uncertain about 'it', i.e. about whether she had actually seen the jewellery. She asks herself if it was 'a dream', meaning she might have imagined it. Although few, there were some examples of very effective and fluent responses: 'the writer is unsure if the jewellery in the third drawer was there or not'; 'the writer is confused as to whether she had really seen it in her aunt's drawer or if she was hallucinating'. Less fluent, but still capturing the correct meaning: 'she was thinking if the jewellery never really was there or maybe she imagined it.'

Giving the effect generally proved more challenging than giving the meaning in **Question 10(b)**, as in **Question 10(a)**, and there was a tendency in many responses to offer the idea of confusion as a response to both meaning and effect: Meaning: 'The writer thought maybe she had not really seen any jewellery.' Effect: 'She started to doubt herself.' The effect of Mary's doubting what she had so obviously seen was to help us understand why she had questioned herself about the incident at all: she was hoping and trying to convince herself that there had been no stolen jewellery and that her aunt was not a thief; that it was not true and there was some other explanation. Some examples of strong answers here: 'it shows that she wants to trust her aunt and does not completely believe Aunt Joan was capable of stealing things'; 'Mary was attempting to give Aunt Joan the benefit of the doubt that she did not steal anything'.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

> **Paper 1123/22**
> **Reading**

Key messages

In **Question 1(a)**, practice is needed in identifying the overarching points and eliminating unnecessary examples. Irrelevant examples and extensions of overarching points, when included, can spoil an otherwise competent response to **Question 1(a)**, which can then have a detrimental effect on responses to **Question 1(b)**. In **Question 1(a)**, candidates should focus on general rather than on particular information and often the more succinctly expressed it is, the better. Samples of responses which lose focus by giving examples as if they are overarching points are given in the section entitled: '**Comments on specific questions**.'

*   In **Question 1(a)**, some candidates write sentences in full which include extraneous information, sometimes abandoning any use of bullet points or line separation. This can cause blurring of points and should be avoided.

*   In **Question 1(a)**, the use of multiple slashes needs to be discouraged as it can result in a response which takes the form of a list of disjointed words. An example of this is: 'shoppers / further money / travel / fuel / coffee', which cannot be regarded as a content point; the content point needs to be expressed succinctly and still make sense in isolation as a meaningful piece of writing which would be intelligible to any reader and not simply to people who have had the benefit of having read the text.

*   In **Question 1(a)**, points should focus firmly on the question (advantages of online and in-store shopping) and avoid the disadvantages which are out of scope of the question, for example: 'People who shop in stores are restricted to particular opening hours' (alone).

*   In **Question 1(a)**, candidates should avoid repetition, for example, 'the internet is always open and online shopping can be done at any time.'

*   In **Question 1(b)**, although there is no specific assessment of use of English, candidates should aim to express their points clearly; this will ensure a well-organised piece of writing which is easy to follow. Practice in the appropriate use of linking devices is necessary to ensure coherence. Linking devices were frequently included but were not always used in a logical or sensible way.

*   Candidates should try to gain a good, overall picture of both the given texts and all questions, before they begin to answer; this is especially important for questions on the second passage. Closer reading of the whole text before tackling the questions helps to clarify the narrative described in the text. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the summary passage but experienced difficulty in responding to the detailed demands of the questions on the second passage. In both sections of the Paper, close reading and careful attention to detail bring the best results.

*   Candidates should have practice in recognising the difference between opinion and fact in the first, non-fiction passage. Candidates should understand that the opinions they are being asked for are the opinions of the author and not their own opinions.

*   Candidates might be encouraged to highlight or underline key words in the question, e.g. in **Question 4(b)** 'the worst of these driving conditions', or in **Question 5(d)** 'give one word'.

*   In the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates should be encouraged to think about the given words in the context in which they appear in the text.

*   Many candidates experienced difficulties with questions in which they were required to answer in their own words. This was seen particularly in capturing the idea of 'adamant' in **Question 3(b)**; closer attention to the context of the words to be re-cast should produce responses with a clearer focus.

- In final question of **Section 2**, candidates should concentrate on appreciation of the writer's craft. Although the format of these questions may appear to be new, the requirements are not. Candidates are still being asked to recognise the literal meaning of a given section of the text, and to comment on the effect on the reader of the writer's use of particular words or images. Further practice in answering this type of question would be beneficial.

- Candidates should be able to write their answers within the parameters of the examination booklet. Where this is not possible, they should write on official additional paper.

General comments

Candidates were required to answer questions based on two passages of around 700 words each, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction, with answers written in a common answer booklet. Candidates appeared to find Passage 1 more accessible than Passage 2.

There were very few incomplete scripts, and few instances of candidates writing their answers outside the parameters of the spaces provided in the examination booklet.

In **Question 1(a)**, there were only a few instances of candidates putting information into the wrong section.

Both passages, the first entitled 'Online and in-store shopping' and the second entitled 'Jennifer', seemed to engage candidates and to stretch and discriminate amongst them. Responses suggested that candidates felt comfortable with the subject matter of both texts, and found them interesting and relevant to their experience.

The first passage assessed candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second, their ability to read for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary question, with 12 of these marks being awarded for selection of content points and 10 marks for the expression of these points in a piece of writing which is relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. Almost all candidates wrote to the required length in **Question 1(b)**, although some responses which were in excess of this were somewhat verbose – affecting scores on Relevance – and less fluent, affecting scores on Coherence.

Where the main points offered in **Question 1(a)** were dependent on unacknowledged examples or were omitted altogether in favour of unnecessary extensions of the points alone, this irrelevant detail was carried forward into **Question 1(b)**. The result was less relevant summaries.

As specified in the rubric for **Question 1(b)**, candidates should use their own words as far as possible. This suggestion, and the explanation that credit is given for organised information presented in an easy-to-follow manner, encouraged the strongest candidates to re-phrase and synthesise their content points fluently and coherently. Some candidates successfully used parts of the passage, rearranging and adding to them to ensure a coherence of their own and to suit their own personal organisation of the content.

The second passage, 'Jennifer', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their ability to select appropriate quotations, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft.

While the majority of candidates attempted every question, there were a number who did not respond to the final section on the writer's craft, though fewer than in previous sessions.

Both spelling and punctuation were generally strong throughout, as were handwriting and legibility.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks. Candidates were asked to identify the advantages of online shopping, and the advantages of in-store shopping, as outlined in the passage. The summary had to be based on Paragraphs 2 – 7, and candidates were required to write their answers in note form, and were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point

under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded, there were 14 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 12, each carrying one mark. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text; some responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the rubric and sample points suggested that they might. Most candidates did use bullet points, and this facilitated a focused approach to identifying content points.

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 described the advantages of online shopping, and there were seven points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 2, there were three content points. The first was that goods purchased online are cheaper. The subsequent point was that online shoppers make further savings as they don't have to pay to travel to the shopping centre or pay for fuel, or pay for the coffee or lunch they might have at the shopping centre. Simply writing that shoppers make further savings was insufficient; the nature of the savings had to be specified. The final content point in this paragraph was that online shoppers are not at the mercy of the elements. Alternatively, the text examples – shoppers aren't caught in the rain or burned by the sun – were acceptable; an 'own words' attempt – such as they are not affected by adverse weather conditions – was also acceptable, provided the negative idea of 'at the mercy of' or 'adverse' was captured. A number of candidates offered the idea in this paragraph of goods being stored in basic warehouses; however, as methods of storage are an advantage for retailers but not for shoppers, this was irrelevant and not credited.

Paragraph 3 contained two content points, both concerning the concept of time. The first was that online shopping is quicker, and the second was that time is freed up for online shoppers to do other or interesting things. Many candidates spoiled their attempt at the first of these points by offering instead, or by adding to an otherwise correct answer, that weekly groceries can be bought in a matter of minutes. This is an example rather than an overarching point and as such cannot be awarded the mark. Being able to separate overarching points from examples of points is one of the tests in this question. Many candidates spoiled their attempt at the second of these points by suggesting that families were the only shoppers who benefitted from online shopping; writing that time was freed up for families (rather than 'people' more generally) to do more interesting things.

In Paragraph 4, there were a further two content points. The first of these was that shoppers know immediately that items are available to buy; conversely the idea could be expressed as shoppers be able to quickly make alternative arrangements if a desired item is unavailable. The qualifications of 'immediately' in the first option, or 'quickly' in the second option, were necessary as in-store shoppers can also find that items are unavailable, but the point of online shopping is that this information is discovered immediately and not after a trip to the shopping centre. The other content point in Paragraph 4 was that the internet is always open, or that online shoppers are not restricted to particular business hours. Many candidates made both of these points.

In the second section of the summary, candidates were asked to give the advantages of in-store shopping and, as with the first section of the question, there were seven points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make.

In Paragraph 5 there were two content points, excluding the first given point. The first point which candidates could make was that there is a social dimension to in-store shopping. This could also be expressed in the idea that shoppers can catch up with, or have coffee with, friends at the shops. The other content point was that there are more reductions available when shopping in a store. Many candidates made both of these points.

In Paragraph 6, there were a further two content points, the first being that shopping can be carried out in malls, or under one roof, and either that these malls buzz with activity or that such shopping is interactive. Some candidates wrote that shopping itself was interactive without specifying that it was malls which provided this. The second available point in this paragraph was that in-store shopping allows us to judge items closely. Many candidates spoiled their answer here by omitting the reference to the idea of 'closely'. Other candidates omitted the content point here, citing one or more of the examples related to perfumes, clothes or fabrics, as if they were an overarching point.

In the final paragraph, Paragraph 7, three content points could be found. The first was that goods purchased in a store are instantly available, or that shoppers don't have to stay at home waiting for deliveries, or that delivery companies might let them down. As with the earlier point that shoppers know immediately if an item

is available, the mention of 'instantly' or 'immediately' was necessary here too. The second and third points to be found in this paragraph were concerned with towns and local areas and people: shops (and not shopping) add colour, personality or individuality to towns or shops attract tourists or visitors to towns who then generate income for the town, and; shops or shopping provides employment for local people. A few candidates made a point about the 'unattractive wildernesses' caused when shops shut in towns, losing sight of the focus of the task.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the advantages of online shopping, and the advantages of in-store shopping, as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150 and 180 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available. They were asked to write up their note form content points from **Question1(a)** into a continuous piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. The responses which scored highly on relevance did so by adhering to the points of the text which were relevant to the question, by avoiding the over-use of supporting details and examples, and also by avoiding non-specific topic sentences, such as 'But there are also advantages to in-store shopping.' Responses that scored highly on coherence were fluent, combined similar points, and linked points in a way that guided the reader through the text using devices such as connectives and adverbial phases. The best responses included common adverbial connectives such as 'nevertheless', 'however', 'furthermore', etc. appropriately but not excessively, while in weaker responses, these were sprinkled throughout candidates' summaries, not always appropriately. The repeated use of 'and', 'but' or 'also' to string points together was also prevalent in weaker summaries. These linking words also appeared in stronger responses but were used sparingly and skilfully to synthesise ideas. Sometimes, a succession of fluent but simple sentences was presented almost as a list. The ability to present answers to **Question1(a)** in clear bullet point note form avoiding wholesale copying from the text, facilitated a successful transformation of their notes into prose for **Question 1(b)** using appropriate linking devices. There were very few cases of incoherent writing. As already indicated, very few answers were shorter than the recommended length and hardly any candidates omitted the question completely.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to select and write down three of the writer's opinions, one from Paragraph 3, one from Paragraph 4, and one from Paragraph 5. The key to answering this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective. The words were 'boring' for the first opinion, 'there is nothing more disappointing' for the second opinion and 'satisfying and thrilling' for the third.

The opinion in Paragraph 3 was that wandering around a supermarket is (a very) boring (activity); this opinion was emphasised by the adjective 'boring', the implication being that another opinion might as easily be that some people love supermarket shopping.

In Paragraph 4, the opinion was 'there is nothing more disappointing than finding that a (particular) item is out of stock, or unavailable in the correct size'. Candidates could write 'there is nothing more disappointing than finding that a (particular) item is out of stock' , or 'there is nothing more disappointing than finding that a (particular) item is unavailable in the correct size'; again the subjectivity was located in the words 'there is nothing more disappointing'.

In Paragraph 5, the opinion was 'it is satisfying and (even) thrilling to search through discounted items looking for a bargain.' As with the opinion in Paragraph 4, candidates could write 'it is satisfying and (even) thrilling to search through discounted items' or 'it is satisfying and (even) thrilling to search / look for a bargain'. The key lay in discerning the subjectivity inherent in the words 'satisfying' and 'thrilling'. Where candidates found one correct opinion, they very often went on to find the other two.

There was, as always, a small number of candidates who offered their own opinions rather than the writer's opinions. Sometimes these suggested opinions were facts selected from the text, e.g. 'In my opinion, online shoppers know immediately if an item is available.' Occasionally, material from Passage 2 was selected and presented as an opinion.

Section 2

Most candidates seemed to find this narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1.

Question 3(a) was a literal comprehension question asking for the two reasons why Jennifer was upset that she was late getting away from the office. This relatively straightforward question was designed to ease candidates into this section of the examination. Candidates could write that Jennifer was upset because she would be late meeting her daughter, or that her daughter was coming home, or coming from university, or coming for the long vacation. Lifting lines 2–3 'this was the much-anticipated day when her daughter Anna was coming home from university for the long vacation' was also an acceptable response. To write merely

that 'her daughter was coming' was too vague. Similarly, 'she was picking up her daughter from the airport', was insufficient, as there was no context for an airport in this paragraph. Some candidates wrote, incorrectly, that it was Jennifer's 'last minute paperwork' which caused the upset.

Question 3(b) was the first of the questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They had to explain what was meant by 'her boss was apologetic but adamant that she should do the extra task'. The key lay in capturing the meaning of 'apologetic' and 'adamant', although this had to be done within a sensible context as the question was more than a test of vocabulary. The question required candidates to 'explain how Jennifer's boss felt' and so answers such as: *apologetic – sorry*; *adamant – insisted* were not accepted. In addition, the contrast in the boss's feelings had to be brought out by words such as 'but', 'however' or 'although'. Almost all responses included some reference to a relevant context with very few simply giving synonyms, and almost all included the contrast. Acceptable answers were responses such as 'he was sorry he had to ask her to do this work but he insisted there was no other solution' or 'although he regretted having to give her the work, he was determined she had to do it'.

There were many successful attempts at 'apologetic'. 'He was sorry' was the most popular correct response; 'he felt bad' was also acceptable. A common incorrect response was to write 'he was sympathetic' or 'he was sorry for her', both of which conveyed a different meaning. Candidates were less successful in capturing the idea of 'adamant'. Correct responses were words or expressions such as 'he demanded', 'he was strict', 'he was unyielding' and 'he would not change his mind'. Incorrect attempts were words or expressions such as 'he persisted', 'he was stubborn' or 'he forced her'.

In **Question 4(a)** candidates were asked in another literal comprehension question for 'the two physical signs of Jennifer's anxiety', the first being that her shoulders were hunched or tense or stiff, and the second being that her heart was racing or beat quickly. The first mark could be awarded by lifting lines 9–10, 'her shoulders hunched' or 'her shoulders hunched up to her ears (with tension)'. However, if the lift continued into 'she peered through the gaps created by the windscreen wipers' the mark was not awarded as this was not relevant to the question. The second physical sign could be given by lifting from lines 11–12, 'her heart raced with the effort of driving' or 'her heart raced with the effort of driving in such difficult conditions' but, if the candidate went on to lift the text further, again the mark was not awarded. Some incorrect responses referred to the windscreen wipers as one of the physical responses, while others incorrectly referred to 'seeing Anna after her absence of almost a year'.

Question 4(b) asked candidates what 'the worst of the difficult conditions' was for Jennifer as she drove. Many candidates correctly selected 'the wind', drawn by 'even worse' in the text which separated the wind from the rain and the darkness. However, 'wind and rain' or 'wind and darkness' were incorrect responses as the question asked for a singular condition, as shown by the words 'the worst' in the question.

In **Question 4(c)** candidates were asked 'what made Jennifer relax'. The answer was that she thought of her plans for Anna's vacation. Alternatively, one of the plans could be given, as in 'their visits to family members' or 'their invitation to friends to share dinner' or 'their shopping trips'. In each case, reference had to be made to 'plans' and to either plans for Anna's vacation or to the idea that the planned activities involved both Anna and Jennifer. It was not necessary to include 'she thought of', but any suggestion that Jennifer was planning activities for Anna's vacation as she was driving, was not correct: the focus of a correct response had to be plans already made. A relatively common incorrect response was 'she thought of spending time with Anna'.

Question 5(a) was an inferential question asking what Jennifer had to do. Candidates were required to infer from 'she had no alternative but to do the same' that she had to do what the car in front did, and slow down or brake. It was incorrect to write that she had to stop the car, and some candidates spoiled an otherwise correct response by adding 'and stop' to 'she had to slow down'.

Question 5(b), like **Question 4(a)** was a literal comprehension question which asked for 'the two indications of roadworks ahead'. As with **Question 4(a)** the marks could be scored by lifting directly from the text, but the lifts had to be sensible and avoid straying into excess material. The first 'indication' was the signs at the side of the motorway or road, and the second was the flashing lights. For the first 'indication', the mark could be gained by lifting from lines 17–18, 'signs by the side of the motorway depicting matchstick-figure workmen warned of roadworks ahead' or simply 'signs by the side of the motorway'. 'Signs' (alone) was not sufficient as that was simply a synonym of the question word 'indication'. There was much confusion over 'matchstick-figure workmen', with some responses describing these as real human beings who were warning motorists rather than as symbols on the roadway signs. Candidates who went on to refer to Jennifer's exasperation were not awarded the mark as by now the focus of the question had been lost. For the second 'indication', the mark could be gained by lifting from line 21, 'flashing (orange) lights confirmed the need for caution', or simply 'flashing (orange) lights'. As with the first 'indication', candidates who went on to refer to the radio, or

who added to an otherwise correct response the fact that 'the car had crawled along for half a kilometre' were not awarded the mark as by now the focus of the question had been lost. Some candidates wrote incorrectly that one of the 'indications' was that the car in front slowed down. This event happened too early in the text for it to be a sign of roadworks; the car in front slowed down because, presumably, the roadworks were slowing down the traffic, or the driver of the car in front had seen the signs by the side of the motorway and/or the flashing orange lights before Jennifer had, simply because his car was in front of Jennifer's car.

Question 5(c) was the second of the questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words and explain what Jennifer's 'best options' were. The meaning of the key words 'endurance' and 'good humour' had to be captured, and, as with **Question 3(b)**, this had to be done within a sensible context. Words and expressions such as 'bearing', 'being tolerant' and, popularly, 'being patient' or simply 'patience' were acceptable responses to capture 'endurance' and there was a reasonable degree of success here. Less successful were attempts to capture 'good humour', with many candidates referring to telling jokes or seeing the situation as funny or amusing, rather than correctly capturing ideas such as 'cheerfulness' or 'optimism' or 'being positive'. Common incorrect responses to this question were: 'Jennifer thought she should relax', 'Jennifer thought she should calm down', 'Jennifer thought she should wait', 'Jennifer thought she should listen to some music', 'Jennifer thought she should look for a short cut' or 'Jennifer thought she should not drive dangerously'.

In **Question 5(d)** candidates were asked to pick out the single word used in Paragraph 3 which conveyed a similar idea to 'crawled along', the answer being 'edged'. Many candidates offered, incorrectly, 'imperceptibly'. Other wrong choices included 'queue', 'traffic', 'forward' and 'crawled', despite the fact that 'crawled' appeared in the question. Some candidates erroneously gave two words, the most popular choice being 'imperceptibly forward'.

Question 5(e) was an inferential question which asked what Jennifer did when she 'chose silence again', the correct answer being that she switched off the radio. The link had to be made between the radio announcer's time check and her agitation at being late; her agitation was increased because the time check reinforced the fact that she was late. Some candidates wrote that Jennifer switched on the radio, information taken from line 21 ('she switched on the car radio to listen to some calming music'); this information came too early in the text to be the correct response to this question.

Question 6 was another inferential question which asked candidates, what Jennifer's 'mission' was. They had to infer from lines 27–29 ('driving up and down each lane looking for a space shaved even more precious minutes off her schedule') that her 'mission' was to find a parking space or to park her car. Less precise answers such as 'she parked her car' or 'she found a parking space' were acceptable, but 'to look for a parking space' was not acceptable, as a correct answer required an outcome and not simply a desire. Some candidates wrote, incorrectly, that her 'mission' was to reach the airport; careful reading of the passage in the context of the word 'mission' was needed to see that Jennifer's need to get to the airport was specified earlier. Other incorrect responses were that she had to pick up Anna, or she had to take the exit from the motorway. Other candidates ignored the question which asked for her mission, and gave two missions, as in 'to get to the airport and to find a parking space'.

Question 7 asked candidates why Jennifer thought she had been 'so stupid'. Many candidates answered correctly that she had gone to the wrong part of the airport, that she was looking at the wrong board, that she was looking at details of the wrong flights, or that she had gone to domestic arrivals instead of international arrivals. Lifting from lines 36–37 ('she was looking at information about domestic and not international arrivals') was the most popular correct response to this question. Incorrect responses tended to be that Anna's plane had been delayed by one hour, or incomplete, as in 'she went to domestic arrivals' (alone) or 'she didn't go to international arrivals' (alone).

Question 8 was a multiple-choice synonym question. Candidates who fared best were those who apparently worked out the best possible choices by taking each word back to its context.

The most successful responses were to **Question 8(c)**, where 'possible' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'prospective', to **Question 8(d)**, where 'position' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'spot' and to **Question 8(e)**, where 'examining' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'scrutinising'. Less successful were **Question 8(a)** where the correct answer was 'rapidly' for 'hastily', with 'nervously' being the most popular incorrect response, and **Question 8(b)**, where 'correct' was the right synonym for 'appropriate' with 'suitable' being the most popular incorrect answer.

Question 9 was a writer's craft question. In each section, **Question 9(a)** and **Question 9(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of a phrase as used in the text, followed by the effect of this phrase.

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Question 9(a) directed candidates to lines 25–26 'hotels, like shiny white teeth, rose against the skyline' and asked for its meaning and its effect. The meaning given could focus either on the simile 'like shiny white teeth', or on the expression 'rose against the skyline'. Correct answers focusing on 'like shiny white teeth' were those which linked 'shiny' to the idea of light and described the hotels as bright, illuminated, glowing or gleaming. Another correct response was to state the idea of their being close together or in a row, like teeth. A common incorrect response was to link 'shiny' to colour rather than to light, and to describe the hotels as painted in a bright colour or painted white. Candidates could also respond correctly by taking their answer from the expression 'rose against the skyline' and state that the hotels could be seen, or became visible or noticeable. A common response here was that 'Jennifer saw the hotels' but this was incorrect as the focus was on Jennifer and not on the hotels.

As with meaning, there were two methods by which candidates could give a correct effect, although they did not need to make their 'effect' response match up to their 'meaning' response. So, for example, candidates could give the meaning of 'like shiny white teeth' and the effect of 'rose against the skyline'. The effect of 'like shiny white teeth' was that a contrast was created between the brightness, or illumination of, the hotels and the darkness of the sky. This was a very challenging idea as the reference to darkness was made in line 7 while the hotels were not mentioned until line 25. There was more success for candidates who opted for the effect of 'rose against the skyline', the answer being that the hotels were beautiful, grand, impressive or imposing, (although not luxurious or opulent, as words like these are associated more with the invisible interior of the hotels than with the visible exterior, which was the focus of the question – Jennifer could not possibly have seen inside the hotels as she drove). A common incorrect response here was taken from line 26: Jennifer 'was approaching the airport'. This was incorrect as it was no more than a meaning lifted from the text and did not relate to the effect of the expression.

Candidates seemed to fare better in **Question 9(b)** than in **Question 9(a)**. Candidates were asked for the meaning and effect of line 47 ('And suddenly, at last, there she was – Anna herself!') The meaning could be captured in, for example, 'Anna arrived' or 'Anna came through the doors', or 'Jennifer saw Anna'. Answers such as 'Anna came out of the airport', or 'Anna came out of the aircraft', although not precise, were also accepted as candidates could not be expected to have knowledge of airports or airport procedures. Common incorrect responses were: 'Jennifer found her daughter' or 'Jennifer met her daughter'; or featured repetition of the question wording: 'Anna was there' or 'there was Anna'.

The effect was that Jennifer was happy or relieved, or that Jennifer had forgotten all her worries or that the waiting had been worth it. It was incorrect to state that the expression showed that Jennifer was worried or that she had a long wait; the focus of the effect was that the waiting and the anxiety were now in the past. The agent had to be specified here; as 'she' could be either Jennifer or Anna. Writing 'she was happy' was therefore too imprecise to be considered correct. Alternatively, the effect on the reader was taken into consideration here, so that 'the effect is to make the reader happy' was an acceptable correct response.

As indicated above, some candidates did not answer **Question 9** at all, more opting not to answer this question than any other on the Paper.