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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE (NEW)  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**SUMMER 2017**

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## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2017

#### UNIT 1

This is the first report on the new specification Unit 1 Oracy for English Language. There are a number of observations to share and I hope the following comments are useful in suggesting strategies for future submissions.

The requirement for two tasks, an Individual Researched Presentation and a Group Discussion, was not a great departure from the previous specification but gave flexibility to candidates (and teachers) in being able to make an appropriate choice of topic for the Individual Researched Presentation from the five areas – Wales, Leisure, The World of Work, The World of Science/Technology and Citizenship. For the Group Discussion there were three topics – ‘Graffiti – art or vandalism?’, ‘Votes for 16 year olds. What do you think?’, ‘Tourism – the new growth industry for Wales?’ These proved accessible to candidates at all levels.

There was also a change in the mark scheme with a total of forty marks available for each task, divided equally between marks for Content and organisation, and Register, grammatical accuracy and range of sentence structures. There were still five Bands for each aspect which provided some further continuity between this and the previous specification.

The whole process of recording the tasks for all candidates was new to schools and colleges and it exposed a number of problems, somewhat exacerbated by the large entry of Year 10 candidates.

#### **Administration**

The best centres provided the work on time, in rank order, on one device – preferably a USB – with detailed records also in rank order. An accompanying copy of the sample list was included and occasionally a covering letter highlighting any particular issues which might have an impact on the moderation process. Tasks were arranged under each candidate with details of when more than one of the sample appeared in a group discussion. Candidates were clearly identified. All notes were attached to the candidates’ records and ideally the recordings were audio-visual.

For many centres, however, providing the requested sample by the required date proved a problem. There were numerous examples of lost or corrupted recordings, sometimes of whole teaching groups. That this should only have emerged at the end of March seemed to suggest that checks of recordings or internal moderation had failed to identify these problems in time to make replacement recordings. Where recordings were missing there was confusion over how to replace these, with many centres arbitrarily substituting another task from a different candidate rather than a complete recording. The issue of possible substitution is one which should be discussed with the Subject Officer prior to the sample being sent to the moderator.

The way in which recordings were presented varied hugely. The best practice has already been mentioned but others provided individual discs or USB devices for each teaching group or used multiple discs with no apparent order of candidates. This latter case caused considerable difficulties for moderators attempting to find the whole of a candidate’s work.

Encrypted devices often failed to have a password provided to access them and numerous problems were encountered with failed recordings, files which could not be opened and recordings which were inaudible or disrupted by intrusive background noise.

In many cases, candidates were not clearly identified. This was a particular issue with audio recordings of group discussions where candidates either did not identify themselves at all, or gave a brief introduction of just their first name. Groups of four, five or even as many as seven were used at times and if the groups comprised only one gender this caused considerable problems in identifying speakers. Had internal moderation taken place, this issue would have been highlighted and perhaps a brief transcript of the opening words of each candidate could have been provided to assist the moderation process. With those centres which chose to use audio-visual recordings, problems of identification were not an issue, except for occasional cases where the candidates were not clearly named.

Timings for the tasks were clearly noted in the Instructions for Teachers – between five and seven minutes, including responses to questions, for the Individual Researched Presentation and ten minutes for the Group Discussion. A majority of the candidates complied with these guidelines, but there was a significant number of Individual Researched Presentations which were brief or very brief – sometimes barely achieving a minute. This brevity was also noted in the Group Discussions, with some lasting as little as two or three minutes, but there were also a significant number of discussions which exceeded the time, sometimes considerably. One was noted by a moderator as lasting for fifty minutes. Clearly, it is good if candidates can sustain a discussion, but time constraints also mean that candidates learn to maximise the time in a discussion and ensure that what is said is the essence of the argument or point of view. Candidates and teachers should be mindful of ensuring that discussions or presentations do not significantly exceed the timing guidelines.

Use of notes or prompt cards was of concern throughout the samples moderators reviewed. Although many centres provided notes, for others very few notes were sent or were only partially provided. In some cases none were provided even though, in audio recordings, it could clearly be heard that pages or cards were being turned and the style of delivery clearly indicated to the listener that a presentation or contribution to a discussion was being read. There were instances where teachers assisted candidates in pronouncing a word which the candidate had said they could not read, there were whispered prompts, or sounds of writing during a silent interlude which then resulted in a new comment being 'read' by a candidate. All these emerged in audio recordings. Audio-visual recordings were completely transparent and it was easy to note when candidates were using prompts and to what degree these were relied on.

Many of the notes provided were very detailed indeed and amounted to a complete script. A large number of centres were reminded that, for the Individual Researched Presentation 'It is not permissible for the presentation to be scripted. It must be emphasised that this is not a reading task, but rather an oral presentation prepared by the candidate'. For Group Discussions, it is also clearly stated that 'No scripting of the discussion is allowed – it should be a natural discussion. It must be emphasised that this is not a reading task.' It must be made clear that in future all notes and prompts should be sent for both tasks. These notes should comprise brief bullet points or headings, not complete sentences or scripts of either the presentation or the points to be made in the discussion.

Record sheets also varied considerably. The best were detailed and combined use of the criteria with personalised comments reflecting the specific achievements of the individual candidate. The least helpful simply used one or two comments from the criteria or highlighted comments within a Band to justify the marks awarded. Some centres devised their own record sheets to complement the standard form and most of these were helpful.

## **Task setting**

### **Individual Researched Presentations**

Using the set five themes, the majority of centres allowed candidates to choose according to their own interests. This resulted in some memorable presentations on matters which candidates were clearly passionate about. These covered such topics as cyberbullying (often from personal experience), issues relating to feminism, the dangers of social media in relation to mental health, animal cruelty, and promoting aspects of Wales.

Some centres decided to give all candidates the same task. While it could be argued that this helped in ensuring a secure assessment, it can very easily disadvantage both the weakest and the best candidates. In a few cases, the same topic – voting at 16 – was used for both the Individual Researched Presentation and the Group Discussion across a whole centre. This really did not allow candidates to play to their strengths and resulted in a narrow range of content – and may well have been somewhat tedious for the candidates.

Generally, those candidates who posed a question or attempted to persuade their audience to a particular point of view in their presentations fared best. There were examples of pre-prepared questions and answers being used, or standard questions for a whole cohort who had spoken on the same topic. Closed questions did not enhance candidates' performances. Purposeful questioning can be a means of liberating a candidate from the shackles of scripted or learned material and allow them to show verbal reasoning skills.

A small number of candidates chose to use PowerPoint to enhance their presentations. Where these used slides as illustrations this was often effective. However, where candidates used these with text added it often resulted in reading from the slides with varying degrees of competence. Some candidates also used clips from YouTube to complement their presentations. While this was sometimes interesting, it added nothing to their task, other than time, as it was not their own words.

Taking each of the topics in turn, 'Wales' was popular, but often approached through suggesting sights a tourist might visit in an area. This suited many candidates, but not those in the upper range because there was often limited opportunity to do more than recount places to visit and why they were attractive. Topics which clearly engaged included 'Poverty in Wales', whether the Welsh Bacc. was useful for students and the issue of holiday homes in Wales. Welsh Sport was also popular. Again, with this latter topic, it generally became an account of either the Welsh football or rugby squads' achievements or highlighting specific sporting personalities such as Gareth Bale or Sam Warburton. Suggesting an ambassador for Wales could have worked well but candidates tended to simply give facts about a celebrity such as Sir Tom Jones, a sporting personality such as Gareth Bale or even someone from the past like Aneurin Bevan, and attempted to justify why they would be a good ambassador. Asking all candidates to promote a new (fictitious) holiday park to tourists or investors was far too prescriptive and narrow in focus and did not enable candidates to achieve the range of criteria. There were, however, some presentations which transmitted a clear sense of national pride concerning the importance of the Welsh language or what it meant to be Welsh, for example, as well as contentious issues - whether Wales should have voted to leave the EU and the system of organ donation in Wales.

'Leisure' allowed many candidates to speak with some passion about a specific hobby or sport in which they were engaged and the best attempted to persuade an audience to try this for themselves. Speaking from personal experience was clearly an advantage here, and there were a number of presentations in which candidates spoke knowledgeably and persuasively about gaming, horse riding, taekwondo, performing arts, heritage railways, kayaking, reading the 'Harry Potter' novels, cycling, women's football and many more. Less successful presentations simply conveyed facts and information, often sounding as if these were taken from an internet source such as Wikipedia. It would be relatively easy to adapt a talk about football into considering whether footballers' pay is justified or whether there is gender equality in football, thus allowing greater scope for the candidates to achieve aspects of the criteria such as analysis and evaluation. There were also interesting presentations concerning the impact of the greater amount of leisure time now available and the impact of leisure on mental health, both of which were challenging topics.

'The World of Work' was a springboard for a number of effective presentations, many on the topic of work experience. These ranged from a simple account of the experience to an evaluation of its importance as a whole, thus allowing for a whole range of achievement. Others spoke about their ambitions to achieve their dream job, joining the army as a career, becoming a tattoo artist, wage equality and the importance of part-time jobs.

'The World of Science/Technology' offered a wide scope, with candidates exploring science-related topics like black holes, 3D printing, biomechanics, robotics, animal testing, fossil fuels and the use of drones. Many appeared to spring from a genuine passion and interest, but there was a feeling that some had simply been researched, which was exposed when questions were asked.

The use of mobile phones in schools, the influence of social media, the impact of violent video games, the influence of technology on the younger generation or on children's learning, the dangers of the internet, cyberbullying and internet safety were just some of the topics under the umbrella of 'Technology', which was clearly an area of expertise for many candidates. Again, many presentations were purely informative but the best posed questions and evaluated information.

'Citizenship' was probably the least popular choice, but did include presentations on the voting age, Brexit, promotion of a charity, stereotyping, the nature of patriotism and at what age someone becomes an adult.

Some topics appeared to have little connection with any of the five topic areas – battles of World War 2 was such an example, clearly springing from interests in history but having no connection with any of the topics. Candidates have a wealth of potential choice here, and the key appears to be letting them choose – with guidance where necessary – something about which they have knowledge and interest rather than resorting to material from the internet or other sources. The specification does encourage research, but this should not be the initial focus but rather used to enhance a presentation.

The use of prompt cards was contentious, with some having brief bullet points and others containing the whole presentation word for word, which were relied on heavily.

## Responding and Interacting (Group Discussion)

While the notion of 'group discussion' was adhered to, in most cases the 'responding and interacting' aspect was not. Far too many of the 'discussions' were polite exchanges of points of view which had been prepared and ordered beforehand, with little response other than that which had been rehearsed and with virtually no interaction. Responding and interacting is clearly a skill which needs to be taught to encourage lively debate and exchange of views.

The makeup of groups proved critical in this task. Where there were groups of three, this tended to work best and particularly where there was a gender mix. Pairs often had little to argue about and having four or more in a group disadvantaged many. Groups of six and seven were not uncommon, and where these groups only managed to speak for around four or five minutes, contributions made by individual candidates were very limited indeed. In some cases a chairperson was nominated, which often meant that that person was restricted to asking questions and directing others rather than contributing their own views. In many cases, teachers intervened to encourage more discussion, but this was sometimes counter-productive, especially with more able groups of candidates.

It was also unhelpful to suggest that candidates adopted a role – as had been the requirement in the previous specification – as this seldom allowed a real voice to emerge and stereotypical comments often prevailed.

With audio recordings the greatest problem was identifying candidates, particularly if they had not been properly introduced. Introducing by name and candidate number with, perhaps, a brief initial statement would help moderators to establish voice recognition. Referring to each other by name from time to time would also be a good practice to adopt.

The three topic areas, 'Graffiti – art or vandalism?'; 'Votes for 16 year olds. What do you think?' and 'Tourism – the new growth industry for Wales?', had been deliberately chosen to enable candidates to relate at least one topic to their own area and their own experiences. It was clear that many candidates had researched their chosen topic considerably, but at times this led to over-long expositions of a viewpoint by candidates taking turns and not really responding to what others were saying.

Using the same topic for all candidates was not always the best policy – for example the subject of voting for 16 year olds proved very demanding for some weaker candidates.

'Graffiti – art or vandalism?' was probably the most popular choice. There was plenty of comment about graffiti in New York, Bristol, London, Australia and several European cities, and a number of candidates had researched graffiti artists other than Banksy and Goes, sometimes bringing examples of their work printed from other sources for the group to discuss. However, many candidates missed the opportunity to focus on their own environment or on towns and cities in Wales, which was a little disappointing. There were some strong views on whether, just because his work was valuable, Banksy was less of a vandal and more of an artist. Some groups were very dependent on repeating the comments in the source material and it was rare to encounter opposing views within a group. Where this did occur, discussion was lively and offered a range of ideas, often leading to an inability to agree on a consensus, which seemed to reflect reality.

'Votes for 16 year olds. What do you think?' was the next most popular choice, yet, again, few candidates explored their own views on whether they would feel able or competent enough to vote. Instead they relied on researching material from around Europe, America and other countries as well as citing the recent events in Scotland. As with the previous topic, polite turn-taking prevailed and there was little sense of candidates having strong opposing views. There were some very able, politically aware candidates who really got to grips with this topic but, conversely, there were less able candidates who found the topic very challenging and really had very little to say beyond what the stimulus material provided for them.

'Tourism – the new growth industry for Wales?' was the least popular choice, but where it was considered, often in areas such as North Wales, there was a real engagement with discussing how former industrial areas had re-invented themselves to attract tourists. This probably promoted the greatest engagement between candidates who were talking about areas they knew and attractions they had experienced.

It is clear that candidates need practise in discussion and also need to get away from formulaic responses such as 'I can see where you are coming from but...' or 'What do you think?....' which have been rehearsed. Perhaps initially providing the broad title of the topic in advance so that candidates can undertake some initial research and only providing the stimulus material at the time the discussion is to take place would encourage more spontaneity and interaction.

## **Assessment**

Overall, many centres worked hard to ensure assessments were sound, and rooted supporting comments in the criteria along with personalised comments for individual candidates. In the best cases, records were full and informative, and all the organisation of the sample recordings was clear and easy for the moderators to access. There was, in a relatively small number of centres, evidence that internal moderation had taken place and adjustments made as a result, which is clearly good practice.

However, in a significant number of centres there was evidence of generosity in assessments, often on a considerable scale. This arose from several aspects. Brevity of tasks was often ignored and Individual Researched Presentations lasting a little over a minute, simply relating straightforward factual information, were sometimes credited with high Band 4 marks. Group tasks where candidates only made one or two brief contributions were also over-rewarded.

The greatest problem was with candidates who were reading from prepared scripts. With audio-visual recordings this was clear and, in general, teachers acknowledged this in their assessments. With audio recordings, there was far less transparency, with no recognition of reading when this was clearly taking place. It is essential that this practice does not continue as it is contrary to the instructions to teachers and must be taken into account in the assessments made if it should happen in future.

Obviously there have been problems with this first submission, and it was clear that a large number of the tasks were not recorded until very late in the process, which led to a lack of consistency as there was no time for proper internal moderation. There was evidence of 'sympathy' marking for candidates who were said to be very shy and it was clear that a large number of candidates were uncomfortable in this whole process. There needs to be a strategy from Key Stage 3 to ensure that candidates are taught how to give a presentation and how to discuss in a group.

Some centres devised a 'carousel' situation with different teachers assessing candidates in various groups. This led to difficulties and considerable inconsistencies when looking at the assessments of teaching groups and often meant that the assessments of a particular group of candidates were not under the control of their English teacher. While this may be a logistical decision, it is not ideal.

This unit of work contributes a significant percentage of the marks for this qualification, and the candidates deserve to be given the appropriate time to learn how to talk and, crucially, to listen to each other. This aspect is particularly difficult to assess from audio only recordings. I would strongly advise that audio-visual recordings are the fairest way of assessing the candidates both for the teachers and the moderators.

The importance of communicating with others, either through engaging an audience with a presentation or interacting with others in a discussion, is a vital life skill. Moderators were unanimous in recognising the skills of many of the candidates and enjoyed much of the work presented to them.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2017

### UNIT 2

#### Overview

A breakdown of the Unit 2 examination on a question-by-question basis is provided below. In overview, candidates were provided with five reading texts of different types for this examination. All were based on the theme of 'Outdoor Activities'.

This was the first Unit 2 examination of the new specification. Five texts were provided for candidates to read, with a balance offered between continuous and non-continuous writing. The theme appeared to have been of interest to candidates and the texts proved accessible, to varying degrees, to all levels of the untiered entry. There was plenty of evidence of commitment and hard work across the examination and, for the majority of candidates, there appeared to be sufficient time allowed for the completion of this paper.

#### Section A

##### **A1. What does the term “outdoor recreation” mean?**

*This question tested the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information and to refer to evidence within texts.*

This was a straightforward location question intended to enable candidates to immediately engage with the theme of the examination. The majority of candidates were able to answer this successfully – the answer ‘any physical activity which takes place in the natural environment’ was easily located at the beginning of the text and it was sufficient to copy the phrase directly from the text. Text A was a non-continuous text and most proved able to isolate the relevant information quickly, and produce an efficient but sufficiently detailed answer. A few candidates shortened the necessary information, perhaps not reading beyond the line on which it was located, and were not credited for this. Overall, this question appeared to allow the vast majority of candidates to engage with the theme, the text and the question.

##### **A2. Which one of the following activities would NOT be included in the definition of “outdoor participation”?**

*This question tested the ability to use verbal reasoning and deduction skills to analyse information in context.*

This was presented as a multiple-choice question. It proved reasonably straightforward for candidates although there were credible distractors included in the answers available for selection. It was essential that candidates looked carefully at the information presented in the text which clearly led them to select golf as the correct answer. It seemed that those who selected other answers, such as artificial skiing, perhaps used only what they thought or had misread the question, rather than applying what they had read in Text A.

As with all of the multiple-choice questions, some candidates took a curious approach to the presentation of their answer. Those who ticked multiple boxes or who did not make sure their selected answer remained clear after making amendments were not able to acquire any marks.

**A3. What do you think is meant by “green space” environments and “concrete” environments?**

*This question tested the ability to interpret meaning and demonstrate verbal reasoning skills in synthesising information.*

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to clearly demonstrate an understanding of both of these terms. Overall, the majority of candidates were able to offer a valid response to this question. It was necessary to interpret the terms presented from the context in which they were presented. Most candidates were able to explain that the term “green space” related to natural areas, such as in the mountains or countryside. Many also proved able to further explain that “concrete” referred to more urban environments. They were not tied to using those specific words to explain these terms, all reasonable explanations were considered, but they did need to move beyond simply stating examples of the different types of setting. Some candidates chose to answer without moving beyond the words from the question (for example, pointing out that “concrete” environments were made of concrete) this was insufficient for credit.

**A4. Which attraction is furthest west on the Adventure Map?**

*This question tested the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information and to refer to evidence within texts.*

This question asked candidates to consider the non-continuous text element to Text B and look at the Adventure Map. It was a relatively straightforward question which asked candidates to select the attraction which was furthest west. A compass was clearly visible to enable candidates to work this out. The correct answer was Activity 6, Rib Ride at Holyhead. There were credible distractors, such as Activity 6 taking place at two locations, but this did not appear to present a barrier to most candidates, a fact which is supported by the success rate for this question.

**A5. What does the article mean when it describes North Wales as having a “reputation as the adventure capital of the UK”?**

*This question tested the ability to interpret meaning.*

To successfully answer this question, candidates were required to engage with all aspects of this statement. It was necessary therefore to show some awareness of the idea that ‘reputation’ suggests being well-known or established alongside an awareness of North Wales being foremost as presented by the word “capital”. Candidates demonstrated many routes to presenting this in their explanations and this was a question for which there were many valid alternatives in the way that answers were expressed. An answer which merely drew attention to the fact that there are lots of adventure activities in North Wales did not, however, demonstrate the necessary interpretation of meaning to be worthy of credit.

**A6. Identify two of the benefits of the Adventure Passport scheme and in your own words explain why they are beneficial.**

*This question tested the ability to summarise information and link ideas within the text.*

In order to answer this question successfully, candidates were required to present two of the benefits of the scheme and explain why each of those benefits was beneficial. The best answers were often those who used the words of the question to frame their answer and to organise their response. Copying out chunks of the text (for example, most of the first paragraph) was not always helpful as, although candidates may have correctly identified the benefit, their selection skills and ability to explain an idea were often not made clear. Examiners were made aware that although the benefits to be found were fairly straightforward, candidates may be more likely to offer credit worthy explanations in an alternative way to the examples offered on the mark scheme.

**A7. The article says that, “pound for pound” children are weaker than they used to be. What does this mean?**

*This question tested the ability to use verbal reasoning skills, inference and deduction skills.* This was presented as a multiple-choice question. Again, and as evidenced by the success rates, this proved reasonably straightforward for candidates although there were credible distractors included in the answers available for selection. It was essential that candidates looked carefully at what the question was asking rather than just choosing answers that they could find in the text. Some of the distractors, for example, did present accurate information from the text but were not the best answers to the question.

**A8. Identify two points this article makes about the physical health of children in more recent times. What does the article suggest are the reasons for each of these points?**

*This question tested the ability to interpret meaning, ideas and information in more challenging writing and to refer to evidence within texts.*

The format of the question paper was intended to aid the candidates in their presentation of this answer, although this did not always prove to be the case. On reviewing a considerable number of answers for this question, the decision was taken to reward candidates solely on the content of their answer and, for this series, disregard the way they had used the answer space. Given the newness of the specification and the many differences it presented, this seemed to be the fairest course of action. Of course, those candidates who plainly presented two clear points about the physical health of children alongside two clear reasons for those points scored highly, irrespective of whether they used the lines given to aid them.

The other unanticipated issue to arise with answers to this question was that so many candidates made the point that children are weaker in more than one way and clearly believed themselves to have made more than one separate point. This led to a significant number of candidates giving two valid but different explanations of the reasons for children being weaker in more recent times. Where this occurred, examiners were asked to credit each of the explanations if valid (and no other point was presented), although clearly the point relating to weakness could only be credited once.

**A9. What two things did watching the kite-flying keep Paul Birmingham’s children away from?**

*This question tested the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information.*

This proved to be a very straightforward question and the majority of candidates were able to locate the relevant information and answer this question successfully. Text D was a continuous text and two details were needed for one mark. However, since both details could be located together this did not seem to be too challenging. Overall, this question appeared to allow candidates across the cohort to engage with the text and the question with few barriers to understanding.

**A10. What impressions does Paul Birmingham give about kite-flying in this extract?**

*This question tested the ability to refer to evidence within texts and use inference and deduction skills to retrieve and analyse information.*

This proved a more challenging question although, again, those candidates who kept the question firmly in mind will have been successful. The question required candidates to present the impressions Birmingham gives about kite-flying which was not the same as providing his thoughts and feelings on the subject. This question required candidates to think carefully about the positioning of their answer. A focus on kite-flying and what it presents as an activity was key. Many wrote accurately that Birmingham gives the impression that kite-flying is a thrilling or exciting activity and that the festival of kites was a spectacular sight (specifically, an ‘awesome spectacle’). Better answers also covered a range of additional positive impressions relating to points covered in Birmingham’s text, for example, that it is exciting enough as an activity to occupy or distract the children or that it is inexpensive and/or easy to participate.

Where candidates elected to move away from the question and respond to what they thought Paul Birmingham's thoughts were through this text (for example, that he was disappointed with his kids or that he was sad that he had never experienced kite-flying before) there was little credit to be found.

**A11. Identify three details that we discover about the narrator's early life from the opening paragraph.**

*This question tested the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information and to refer to evidence within texts.*

This was a reasonably straightforward question with most candidates able to accumulate marks. Candidates were awarded one mark for each appropriate point, up to a total mark of three. There appeared to be few barriers to success with this question and it was certainly attempted by the majority of candidates. The most common mistake occurred when candidates attempted to provide information which came from further on in Text E than the opening paragraph. Clearly the question did not solicit this. Also, those candidates who wrote as if the narrator was a young boy, making very general comments such as that he was young and a boy, did not manage to access the marks that were available. As ever, tracking through the text with a clear awareness of the chronology of the details presented in this paragraph was helpful to candidates.

**A12. The narrator refers to the "climbing ropes at work". Select one explanation from the list below which best describes what he means.**

*This question tested the ability to demonstrate verbal reasoning skills, inference and deduction skills in context.*

This was the third multiple choice question on Unit 2. Again, and as evidenced by the success rates, this proved reasonably straightforward for candidates although there were credible distractors included in the answers available for selection. As with previous questions, it was essential that candidates looked carefully at what the question was asking rather than just choosing answers that they felt to be true. Some of the distractors, for example, did use vocabulary to be found in the text (for example, Bonatti confessed to being 'fascinated' by the 'spires and crests' on which he would see the 'climbing ropes at work'). The majority were able to spot that the only accurate response was that the ropes were being used by climbers on the peak. It was also clear from the number of amendments made to answers to this question that candidates had been taught to reflect on their elected choice and make changes if necessary. In approach, it appeared that candidates had generally been well-prepared for the challenges of verbal reasoning.

**A13. Using information from Text D and Text E, synthesise the feelings of the writers to the activities they describe.**

*This question tested the ability to synthesise information effectively from more than one text.* Over the last couple of years, through CPD sessions and feedback received by WJEC with regard to the new specification, it has appeared that this was one of the skills that centres were most concerned about. In order to address this, and to add clarity for candidates given their relative inexperience of these types of questions, the decision was taken to make sure that in this instance the question clearly and overtly indicated that the skill of synthesis was being tested.

Pleasingly, the majority of candidates proved able to access this question and were able to draw information from both texts in order to do so. Some presented the feelings of the writers succinctly and with little direct reference to evidence from the text but the vast majority elected to organise their answer around examples that they had selected from the individual texts (for example, 'who knew' was often used to suggest kite-flying presented unexpected pleasure or Bonatti's fascination with the climbers was often evidenced by that fact that he 'would watch them for hours on end'). Either approach was valid. The important factor was whether the candidate had managed to present a range of feelings experienced

by the two writers to the activities they described. Using the text, often seemed to enable candidates to organise their answers and get their thoughts down in a timely fashion. There is no requirement for candidates to cite which text they are referring to but again many appeared to do this in order to aid the organisation of their answer and their thoughts. It is also worth offering the reminder that skills of comparison are not being tested in this question. Those candidates who attempted to offer comparative points here often wasted valuable time and sometimes led themselves away from the point of the question.

This was a higher tariff question and both this and the space provided for an answer will have indicated to candidates that some time should have been spent providing a full answer to this question. Very brief answers with little range in the points presented will have been self-penalising. Answers which misjudged the evidence in front of them also may have struggled to access marks. For example, those candidates who wrote at length about Paul Birmingham's great disappointment at not being included in this activity and his heartbreak at rejection by his 'three-year-old' very much missed the tone of his piece – as supported by his 'But seriously' in response to what he had said.

Overall, the attempt rates for this question, particularly given its location towards the end of the Reading section, and the progress that some were able to make here, was reassuring.

## Editing

**A14. Billie always \_\_\_\_\_ (a) \_\_\_\_\_ with determination. Good preparation was \_\_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_\_ to any sporting event.**

(a) **Circle** the word below that best fits gap (a):

trained                      worked                      thought                      showed

(b) **Circle** the word below that best fits gap (b):

inevitable                      essential                      predictable                      unimportant

*This question tested the ability to understand texts at word level.*

As with the other editing questions, this question tested a candidate's ability to work out which words were the best fit in the context of the sentence presented. Although more than one of the words may have been grammatically correct, the skill in editing was shown through selecting the answer which made the most sense.

Again, the success rates for this question suggested that many of the candidates were well equipped to answer correctly. Barriers to success often came from the candidate's own presentation of his/her answer. The instruction was clearly to **circle** the words to be chosen and many elected not to do this. Where the answer was made clear (for example, through underlining, highlighting or putting ticks next to the correct selection) credit was given. Candidates who crossed out and redrew circles in the correct place were also awarded the mark. Difficulties arose when candidates did not make it clear which of the answers they chose. It is worth reinforcing the message that candidates who do not make their answer clear are likely to struggle on these questions.

**A15. Circle the pair of words that best fit the meaning of the sentence below.**

Caroline felt ..... for Joseph's obvious loneliness, but that did not mean she was keen to sacrifice her own ..... to take care of him.

- empathy – money
- horror – house
- sympathy – independence
- upset – children
- happy – potential

*This question tested the ability to understand texts at sentence level.*

As with the other editing questions, this question tested a candidate's ability to work out which answers were the best fit in the context of the sentence presented.

As this was the first year of the specification, the decision was taken to follow the approach taken in the SAMs (sample assessment materials) in the presentation of this question. Candidates should have been prepared to select the pair of words which provided the clearest meaning when inserted into the question. Again, this did not prove to be problematic for the majority and the success rates were encouraging for this question. Barriers to success again often came through candidates not following the instructions of the question in the presentation of their answer. For example, some elected to ignore the pairings and the instruction to circle and write their answers into the blank spaces. Where the right answers were selected, examiners were instructed to mark these as correct. More difficulties arose though, when candidates selected two words from different pairs – whether by writing them in or circling individual words. Clearly, such answers could not offer an accurate response to the question that had been asked.

**A16. Read the text below which consists of sentences in the wrong order then answer the questions that follow:**

1. Still, what was done was done. Now to make the most of it.
2. She knew she should have been going to work.
3. Jody headed to her car on that Friday morning feeling a little guilty.
4. Instead she was planning a day at the beach.
5. She recalled the feigned illness she had invented on the phone to her boss.

(a) Which sentence should come **second** in the text?

(b) Which sentence should come **fifth** in the text?

*This question tested the ability to understand texts at text level.*

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to work out the order for all of the sentences in order to see which sentence best fit into the required location. Looking at the sentences individually it was possible to come up with various orders which would appear to make sense. The requirement was to choose the order in which the meaning made the most sense. For example, the fifth choice ('She recalled the feigned illness she had invented on the phone to her boss.') made the most sense when situated directly in front of the first choice ('Still what was done was done.') because this sentence contained the direct action of inventing the illness which the 'done' of the following sentence referred to.

As expected, this proved to be the most challenging of the editing questions and while many candidates proved able to determine at least one of these answers, this was not the case for all of them.

The correct sequence of sentences was as follows:

1. Jody headed to her car on that Friday morning feeling a little guilty.
2. She knew she should have been going to work.
3. Instead she was planning a day at the beach.
4. She recalled the feigned illness she had invented on the phone to her boss.
5. Still, what was done was done. Now to make the most of it.

## Section B

### Proof Reading

**B1.** In this question, candidates were asked to read a booking form designed by a new company offering Outdoor Activities. They were asked to circle five errors and write the corrections in the spaces provided.

*This task tested a candidate's ability to write accurately.*

The majority of candidates were able to make some progress with this question with 'Adress' probably being the most commonly identified and accurately corrected error. The layout of the material appeared to offer few barriers with most candidates sensibly electing to write their corrections in the spaces provided.

Unfamiliar terms perhaps provided the greatest distractor to candidates here with many identifying 'gorge walking' and 'abseiling' as errors when they were in fact correct. Although this clearly narrowed the number of points which they could score for this question, these were the types of answers that were often given towards the end when they had perhaps failed to locate the real errors and were being more speculative in approach. Some candidates chose to complete the form themselves which was clearly not the intention of the task. Others wished to make suggestions as to missing content or physically change sections of the forms. It is worth reinforcing that these questions will not test layout or content choices which could be subjective. This task is designed to assess written accuracy.

### Writing

**B2.** Candidates were given the choice of which task to complete for this question. They were able to choose between:

- (a) Write an account of a time when you enjoyed or hated taking part in an outdoor activity.
- (b) "It's essential that more people are active, more often." (Professor Laura McAllister, Chair of Sport Wales)  
Write an essay to explain how far you agree with this view, giving clear reasons and examples.

Task A was a narration task and produced some enjoyable accounts. The task was designed to elicit some strength of feeling towards the activities presented and the candidates did not disappoint in what they presented. There were strong feelings in evidence both for and against some of the activities in question.

Task B was an exposition task and this produced some well-considered and detailed writing. For this piece, many candidates drew upon the reading material successfully as a starting point upon which to base their views. Text C seemed particularly thought-provoking here and influenced many in the direction of their arguments.

Whilst it was perfectly acceptable for candidates to be influenced by their reading material, clearly those answers which featured large chunks of the reading material copied into their writing were self-penalising.

There were many pleasing attempts at both question types here and many candidates proved able to write in detail and really showcase their skills. Timing had clearly not proved problematic and examiners were pleased to report that sequencing, audience awareness and development of writing in line with its respective purpose were all very much in evidence. Where candidates wrote very briefly or did not complete their writing this was self-penalising. Those candidates who wrote in a direction which lost (or indeed never had) a sense of the task set also struggled to make much progress.

As has proved the case in previous specifications, written accuracy was an area of concern in responses to both of the tasks. Where candidates made significant numbers of errors, were unable to sustain awareness of tense and agreement, or did not demonstrate adequate control over the structure and sentencing of their work, they were likely to struggle. Clearly, the accuracy of a piece of work has much to do with its coherence and accessibility for a reader. This is perhaps one of the most significant issues affecting those candidates who will not receive their desired mark in this summer's examinations and is perhaps the most pressing issue to be addressed going forward.

Finally, there are a couple of points to make in relation to the Writing questions generally. Word processed work is subject to the same marking of errors as hand written work and candidates should be encouraged to check for 'typos' in their writing. An accumulation of incorrect spellings as a result of typing can have a very significant effect on the clarity of writing and, ultimately, the mark given for Written Accuracy. Also, there appeared to be a number of candidates whose handwriting made their work very difficult to read in this series. Examiners strive to read all that is put in front of them, and there are procedures in place to aid with the reading of less legible writing, however, there is still a small minority of answers produced that simply cannot be read. This is not a satisfactory outcome for either the candidate or the examiner and this is something which we would implore centres to consider in advance of the exam being taken.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2017

### UNIT 3

#### Overview

A breakdown of the Unit 3 examination on a question-by-question basis is provided below. Candidates were provided with five different types of reading text for this examination. All were based on the theme of 'Fairtrade'.

This was the first Unit 3 examination of the new specification. Throughout the paper, there were no unexpected question types that had not been seen in the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and the topic of Fairtrade was a familiar one to many candidates. Five texts were provided for candidates to read, a balance of continuous and non-continuous, with a combination of text and illustrations. The texts provided readers with some differing views about the Fairtrade process and the effects it has for those who both purchase the products and those who produce them.

Across the cohort and ability range there was a good deal of commitment and it was evident that the majority of candidates were working diligently. As with all examinations, there were some who did not use their examination time effectively, choosing instead to draw, doodle or write inappropriate comments. Thankfully, such cases were few and far between. It was also pleasing to note just how engaged some of the candidates were by the topic as the writing section generated some very well developed and thoughtful responses.

#### **1. How much money is generated in the UK alone from Fairtrade sales?**

*This question tested the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information and to refer to evidence within texts.*

This was a straightforward location question which most candidates managed to answer successfully and efficiently. The text was a non-continuous text and most located the information quickly and then produced an appropriate answer. While most candidates were precise in what they chose to write down, others chose to shorten the information in their answer (e.g. incorrectly writing 23 rather than £23million) and lost marks in the process of doing so. Overall, this question appeared to allow candidates across the cohort to engage with the text and question.

#### **2. What percentage of female farmers and workers are employed on plantations?**

*This question tested the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information and to refer to evidence within texts.*

This question was relatively straightforward although the correct answer was surrounded by some credible distractors. Some candidates were unable to disentangle the information but if they made it clear how many female workers are employed on plantations, even if they chose to include some of the additional information, they were credited. Candidates who simply wrote down the correct figure (46) were awarded a mark as it was implicit in the question that we were looking for a percentage. Again, candidates did not struggle with this question although a few were unsuccessful due to carelessly transferring numbers (e.g. they wrote down 45% rather than 46%).

### **3. What is the purpose of Text A?**

*This question tested the ability to understand and recognise the purpose of a text.*

Although only worth one mark, this is a tricky question as candidates have to apply their understanding of the PISA definitions to a specific text. Text A was a colourful non-continuous text which included a range of facts and figures about the Fairtrade process. The figures provided the reader with additional information about the process and about those who work in Fairtrade organisations. This was a text regarding activities that relate to society and the generic questions at the start assumed an anonymous contact with the reader. The purpose of Text A was therefore public.

Most candidates selected one of the four possible answers in response to this question but there were a number who made it difficult to determine what their final answer was. Some candidates chose to tick multiple boxes and these responses were not credited.

### **4. What does the phrase “substantial contribution” mean in this text?**

*This question tested the ability to demonstrate verbal reasoning skills in context.*

Candidates were asked to consider the meaning of the phrase “substantial contribution”. This phrase came in the final paragraph of the text, a text in which there was an ever-increasing sense of commitment to the Fairtrade process. Candidates who read the whole text and then tried to determine the meaning of this phrase, in context, often found that they were able to eliminate all of the credible distractors. The success rate for this question was approximately 70% which suggests that many candidates found this to be an accessible question.

### **5. Text B suggests the steps you can take to increase your support for Fairtrade. Put these steps into order by numbering each of the steps below from each section.**

*This question tested the ability to demonstrate verbal reasoning skills when sequencing information.*

To answer this sequence question successfully, candidates had to determine the most likely order of steps. The task included the word “increase” and this was intended to help candidates see that the level of support suggested an intensification in terms of commitment. The first answer had been completed for candidates and a small minority chose to ignore this. In the SAMs, candidates were given one answer to help them when reasoning the correct sequence so this was not an unfamiliar attempt to help them. Other candidates were careless in their application of numbers (for example numbering their responses 1-3, or 2-5, rather than 2-4). Some candidates used the same number on more than one occasion and this also made it difficult to credit their answers. Some candidates who used a word processor for the majority of their other questions, chose to hand write this answer in the answer booklet and this was a decision that ensured their answer was presented clearly. Others (also word processing) who tried to sequence the information and then present it using different numbers/letters to the original text often became very confused and struggled to gain reward.

It is worth reinforcing the message that all candidates who choose to complete any rough work to help them answer this question, should do so in the space below the question or in the text booklet. Several candidates tried to work out the sequence in their answer space, made several errors and crossings out, and then struggled to communicate their final answers clearly.

### **6. Martin Luther King said, ‘Before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you’ve depended on more than half the world’. Explain what Martin Luther King meant.**

*This question tested the ability to demonstrate verbal reasoning skills in context.*

To successfully answer this question, candidates were required to engage with both parts of the statement – the fact that we depend or rely on people to produce our food and that food

is produced on a global scale. Understanding of both elements was required to gain the mark on offer. Copying out chunks of the text, for example the section about 'undernourished' people did not demonstrate the ability to engage with the quotation and its meaning. For this type of question, it is not appropriate to simply copy words from the quotation or reorder them as some chose to do. Some candidates focused on the idea that the produce we use or consume has been produced globally while others took a more holistic view that many of our morning activities rely on global products (for example taking a shower, the clothes we wear etc.) and both were acceptable. It is imperative that candidates understand that questions which ask them to determine the meaning of something are answered by simply trying to put across what the actual words imply. A small minority chose to try to analyse the language used in the quotation rather than its meaning and this approach was inappropriate.

## **7. Summarise five reasons why, according to the text, we should support Fairtrade.**

*This question tested the ability to summarise information.*

It would have been impossible to predict how many candidates would struggle to produce an effective and concise summary. Those who could summarise the information in the text in a coherent and concise manner were rewarded for their skills but they were certainly not in the majority. A significant proportion of the candidates simply did not summarise the information and, in many cases, candidates produced a 'summary' that was significantly longer than the original information. During CPD sessions in the run up to the exam, it was explicitly stated that candidates should summarise **in their own words**.

Once a number of sample responses had been analysed (after the examination and prior to the marking system being released) the decision was made to revise the mark scheme and to give some credit to those who included quotations or more detailed explanations. It was felt that this approach was fair given the newness of the specification but we capped such responses at 3 marks. This is not a precedent for future series and it would be prudent for teachers to focus on how to teach summary skills, which are essential for success in this examination but also a vital lifelong skill. The following are observations which highlight what is required to produce a successful summary:

- A summary should be an abbreviated version of the original text.
- A summary should be written in a candidate's own words.
- A summary should not include any analysis or explanation.
- A summary should also be concise. It was quite alarming how many candidates chose to include additional pages when the space included was already generous.
- It is perfectly acceptable for a summary to be written in bullet point form.
- A summary does not need to be written in full sentences.

The following is an example of a response which would be awarded full marks.

- Fairtrade food is safe to eat
- Fairtrade empowers the workers
- Fairtrade means these people can feed their own families
- Fairtrade allows businesses to grow
- Fairtrade gives us tastier and more environmentally friendly food

## 8. What is meant by the word “consortium”, used in the introduction to the text?

*This question tested the ability to demonstrate verbal reasoning skills in context.*

This question was a multiple choice question and candidates had to select one of four options which they felt best described the meaning of the word. Candidates who found the word at the top of the passage and then used the additional surrounding context to help them answer the question were successful.

## 9. How does Gerardo Arias Camacho convince the reader of the benefits of Fairtrade?

*This question tested the ability to use inference and deduction skills to retrieve and analyse information from written texts and reflect on the ways in which texts may be interpreted.*

The inference and analysis question is one which both teachers and students are familiar with and this was a typical how question. Candidates were asked to consider how the reader is convinced of the benefits of Fairtrade and there was plenty of content to enable them to produce full and varied responses.

The article began with a Fairtrade farmer, Gerardo Arias Camacho, explaining what life was like before Fairtrade and most candidates saw that this comparison was being used to convince the reader of the many virtues of the Fairtrade system. Unfortunately, some candidates were unable to see that this section of the text described what life was like before Fairtrade and these candidates became tangled in answers which ultimately were not aptly focused on the text or indeed accurate. Some candidates became so engrossed in the differences before Fairtrade that they didn't get to address what the system is like *now* that Fairtrade exists. Those who were successful included a number of different examples from across the text but those who were less successful often limited the marks they were awarded due to the fact that they focused on such a narrow section of the text. Brief and unsupported answers to this type of question tend to be self-penalising.

'How' can be answered in different ways. The analysis question is not intended to encourage a relentless hunt for technical devices (or for candidates to be guided by techniques rather than being guided by the question), particularly when some candidates can usually identify devices correctly but have limited sense of how they work and even then, they do not always link them to the relevant section of text/evidence. Analysis questions aim to encourage candidates to read and understand a writer's arguments and how these are conveyed to the reader (any techniques used when conveying their messages can be mentioned and explored, when relevant, but should not be commented on at the expense of clarity and focus.

Many candidates who made a good attempt to answer this question did so by mainly concentrating on the content of the passage. Candidates who worked chronologically through the text often produced more coherent and methodical responses. Top Band answers always went beyond the spotting of factual content and these answers were not only selective in their choice of material but included concise explanations and comments about the effect of the information included. The very best answers responded to language, the method of the writer and the writer's blatant comparison between life before and after Fairtrade. When working back through this passage, it may be helpful for teachers and candidates to start by thinking about what Camacho does (method) to convince the reader of the benefits of Fairtrade overall, before analysing isolated words and phrases.

**10. What does Richard Shannon mean when he says, “If it doesn’t have a Fairtrade logo then we must be holding the farmer down and standing on his neck whilst we steal his coffee.”**

*This question tested the ability to demonstrate verbal reasoning skills in context.*

Questions are varied in terms of challenge and this was one of this year’s more challenging questions. Candidates were asked to explain what is meant in the quotation above but key to answering this question was to locate the quotation in the passage and to then apply the context of the passage to demonstrate an understanding of meaning. Understanding of this question hinged on candidates grasping the idea that there is a misconception amongst consumers and the general public that Fairtrade is the only system which does not exploit the farmers. Most candidates grasped the idea of ‘steal’ and were able to find some synonyms to explore the meaning of this word. Candidates used words such as ‘robbery...theft... misuse...’ to help them to explore the idea that producers or farmers are being exploited for the goods they produce. There were a few other challenges for candidates. Firstly, this is not what Richard Shannon thinks, this is what he thinks other people perceive about Fairtrade produce. Secondly, the use of the metaphor was a challenge for some who read this literally and suggested that farmers were actually being physically abused. Some higher ability candidates spotted that this was a metaphor and that the writer was being sarcastic but then stated only the techniques, not the actual meaning of the phrase.

This question was allocated only three lines to answer and it was a little worrying that a small minority of candidates took the opportunity to write lengthy descriptions in which they explored language and techniques. This approach showed an inability to engage with the question.

**11. Explain why some coffee lovers are turning their backs on Fairtrade.**

*This question tested the ability to interpret meaning and ideas in challenging writing and understand and recognise the reliability of texts.*

Candidates were clearly familiar with this type of question as a number of questions asking for explanations were used in the SAMs. Although Text E was quite challenging in terms of reading demand, the question itself was relatively straightforward. Some of the points from the text were self-explanatory and required little in the way of clarification to suggest why coffee lovers are abandoning Fairtrade.

A wealth of reasons were on offer in the passage and there were plenty of possible explanations as can be seen in the range of indicative content comments in the mark scheme. A huge number of candidates engaged with the idea of Aldi and Lidl carrying fewer Fairtrade items although a small minority misread this information and suggested Sainsbury’s stocked fewer Fairtrade items. Some of the points in the mark scheme can be found in small dense sections of text but as long as candidates were able to disentangle the information and make distinctly different points about each, they were rewarded. As with all other questions, those who included lengthy or unselective quotations did not usually achieve high marks.

**12. Compare what the writers of Text D and Text E say about the effects of Fairtrade on the farmers and workers who work for Fairtrade groups.**

*This question tested the ability to interpret themes, meaning, ideas and information in a range of texts and comparing and evaluating the usefulness, relevance and presentation of content.*

This question required candidates to focus on a relatively small portion of the text. Candidates were asked to look at Texts D and E and to comment on what the two texts say about the effects of Fairtrade on the workers. Candidates who deviated from text question and instead began to comment on the wider effects of Fairtrade on the environment and the consumer, were not credited.

There are a few barriers to success when completing this type of question:

- Candidates must read the question carefully and remain on task
- Unlike the synthesis question, when candidates produce a comparison, it is imperative that they make it clear from which text they got their information
- Candidates need to refer to both texts, not just one
- Candidates need to make as many points as they can from each of the texts. Those who simply write down one or two points will only gain a very small number of marks.

There were plenty of details which candidates could include. Text D emphasised the huge benefits to the farmers operating under the Fairtrade system. Benefits such as 'stability' and 'education' coupled with 'pride' and community spirit were all easy to spot and could allow candidates to quickly accumulate marks. Text E was a little less positive about Fairtrade and the writer clearly has misgivings about the Fairtrade process. This text emphasised the lower wages and the idea that Fairtrade 'doesn't provide farmers with any greater guarantee of future income'. It also focused on the treatment of workers and the misuse of Fairtrade income.

A comparison question does not invite candidates to re-explore all of the information they have included in previous questions. There was no suggestion in this question that candidates were required to analyse and explain the reasons behind the differences. When producing a comparison, candidates who methodically and systematically work through both texts and highlight the points that are the same and points that are different usually achieve high marks.

## **Unit 3**

### **Section B**

Candidates were required to produce two pieces of writing (one argumentation and one persuasion) which were linked loosely to the topic studied during the reading examination. Although there have been changes to the task types and the marks apportioned to each of these (from the previous specification) the usual messages regarding writing remain unchanged.

#### **Task 1**

To complete this task, candidates were required to write a letter to their Headteacher or Principal giving their views on the possible introduction of Fairtrade items in the school canteen. Candidates were told that the proposal would be linked to an increase in prices. This task was an argumentation task as candidates were required to give their views on the proposal. Candidates could use information from the reading materials but these should only ever be used to substantiate a point and should not be copied wholesale or unselectively.

Most candidates recognised that this was a formal letter and required a formal format. The majority included addresses at the top of the letter, although some did not manage to sequence these accurately. There was a good deal of discussion at some CPD sessions this year about the requirement for an address at the top of a letter. As was stated at the CPD sessions, candidates are not penalised if they do not include an address. However, an accurate address/format may enhance the overall quality of the writing. Salutations are also an important part of letter writing. Candidates should be able to spell and punctuate these correctly. Some candidates muddled their greetings but most adopted a formal style/ tone.

Structure and sequence in writing is key to its success. Many candidates used the planning page to plan their writing, and many plans included an indication of sequence. Those who chose not to plan, in most cases, were not helped by their decision. Quite often, candidates who did not plan, produced writing that was either disjointed or aimless in direction and undeveloped.

Interesting and engaging content is imperative. Many candidates had a clear view about the proposal and whether it would be appropriate to introduce it in their school, which was pleasing. Some candidates tried to include information to support both sides of the argument and while some were successful, others were not, particularly when they did not reach a clear decision. Many candidates chose to include quotations, sentences or phrases from the source material, which was perfectly acceptable. There was no need to cite sources when including this information (although some did) and the majority simply embedded the information into their own arguments. A small minority chose to copy huge swathes of the reading texts. This approach is not advisable. Candidates who copy information do not allow themselves to give their own views and ultimately limit the marks that they can be awarded.

Across the ability range, candidates found plenty of different things to write about. Many felt that choosing Fairtrade was morally and ethically right although perhaps not financially viable. Candidates gave a wealth of reasons to support this view point including making links between farmers in foreign countries and farmers in Wales. A substantial number of candidates made convincing arguments to support the idea that underprivileged farmers/families in Wales require support before farmers/families in other countries. A number of very sensible arguments linked this notion to the Brexit vote and the election. It was also interesting to see candidates who linked the proposal to their own lives and the lives of their peers. Some candidates talked sensitively about free school meals, funding issues and financial constraints for families. Very few candidates struggled to find something to write about for this task.

As always, technical accuracy was one of the main stumbling blocks. Some candidates struggled to punctuate from the very beginning with some strangely placed commas in their salutations. Some candidates managed to write entire paragraphs with only a full stop at the end and comma splicing was a common feature. I was pleased to see that many candidates chose to only include single exclamation and question marks this year. Inappropriate use of semicolons is a concern and it is advisable that only candidates who are able to use these accurately should be encouraged to do so. Some candidates included a tick list of different types of punctuation, on their planning page, which they then tried to shoehorn into their writing. It is far better for candidates to simply write naturally than to force punctuation in where it does not fit. The usual spelling errors were evident across many papers. Basic homophone errors with words such as there and their, where and were, were not uncommon. It is also a little disappointing when candidates do not manage to spell words correctly that they have been given in the task.

## Task 2

For their second piece of writing, candidates were asked to produce a talk to support a local charity. The aim of the talk was to raise awareness about the charity and to persuade others to support it. Candidates were given some bullet points to help them. Using the bullet points was not a requirement but many chose to use these as the basis for their writing. Although the task mentioned a local charity, candidates were free to use any charity that they wished to write about. Candidates were not penalised if they wrote about national charities, such as Cancer Research, which many did. Some candidates wrote about their own local charities and it was often very moving to read about some of the charities that had either been used by candidates or members of their family.

With this type of task, there is always the temptation for candidates to produce emotionally charged writing in which they describe their grief or loss or unhappiness. Occasionally when this happens, candidates tend to lose control of the writing and of the task at hand. It is fair to say, that this was not the case for most candidates this year. Many candidates talked about situations in their lives where they had experienced loss and grief but most did not dwell on this and simply used their emotions as a vehicle to raise awareness for the charity and to persuade others to support them. There were some very admirable pleas for support and many examiners reported being emotionally moved by the challenging circumstances faced by some of our candidates. In terms of raising money, cake sales were widespread and outdoor fun events, marathons and charity football matches were also popular choices for candidates. Some candidates were quite creative in terms of the activities chosen for their charity events and this undoubtedly increased interest for the reader.

Some candidates chose to write about fair trade charities which was also suitable. Again, the temptation to copy proved too much for some who copied out chunks of the texts and were not rewarded highly for doing so. Some candidates made a valiant attempt to link the Fairtrade process to farming in Wales and were well received. Candidates who chose a charity or topic with some level of personal interest often found they were able to write in more detail and with greater understanding than those who did not give the content and direction of the writing much thought before they began.

To conclude, the following are very common issues associated with less successful writing:

- Basic errors, which impact on meaning
- Loss of focus on the task
- Unselective copying from the resource materials
- Disjointed arguments (candidates jump erratically from one idea to the next)
- Brief and undeveloped writing
- Lengthy writing which loses all control and meaning.



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