

May 2015 subject reports

English B

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 15 | 16 - 30 | 31 - 45 | 46 - 60 | 61 - 72 | 73 - 86 | 87 - 100 |

Standard level

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 13 | 14 - 29 | 30 - 46 | 47 - 60 | 61 - 71 | 72 - 85 | 86 - 100 |

Higher and Standard level internal assessment

HL Component grade boundaries

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

SL Component grade boundaries

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

General Comments

The following observations apply to both Higher and Standard levels and are intended to reflect the consensus of views reported by examiners.

The Individual Oral Interview procedure introduced in May 2013 now appears to have been fully understood, and put into practice successfully, in general, by the vast majority of centres; as indicated in the following quick survey of major elements :-

Forms: Form 2/BIA was correctly completed in most cases, although a few teachers failed to enter clear comments to explain how marks had been allocated.

Timing: Overall control of timing appears to have improved to some extent, following the instruction that moderators would only listen to the first 10 minutes of the recording. However, a few centres continue to allow the interview to run over the maximum permitted time. A more common problem is that candidates give presentations which exceed the 4 minutes required. Teachers should note that they are expected to step in and interrupt over-long presentations – it is important that candidates should be given the full programmed time to demonstrate interaction skills.

Suitability of photographs: Most of the visual stimuli submitted with recordings were suitable, in that they were (a) photographs, (b) in colour, and (c) fairly clearly related to the chosen Topic. Typically unsuitable photographs were either 'iconic' (very simple images with little detail), or clearly unrelated to anglophone cultures.

Suitability of captions: Most photographs were accompanied by a suitable caption. Weaker captions were either so simple that they gave the candidate no support, or excessively lengthy, or 'exam questions' requiring very precise answers and allowing the candidate no opportunity to develop personal ideas.

Presentations: The majority of presentations about the stimulus photograph were reasonably clearly structured. In most cases, candidates explained their ideas at least competently. Teachers should advise candidates not to restrict themselves to description alone – a substantial proportion of the presentation should involve explaining ideas related to the subject of the photograph, to the option concerned, and ideally to Anglophone culture.

Teachers' question technique: The majority of teachers asked clear, succinct and supportive questions, guiding the candidate's responses effectively. As mentioned in the May 2014 report, a small minority of teachers have a weakness for long, rambling, unfocused questions.

Linkage to target culture: The comment made in the May 2014 Subject Report still applies: “The instruction given in the Language B Subject Guide is that ‘The student describes the photograph and relates it to the option and the target culture(s).’ (SL p.52; HL p.59). Such reference to the Anglophone target culture was absent from either the candidate’s presentation or the interaction in Part 2, in the majority of recordings.”

The range and suitability of the work submitted

At both levels, there was a slight improvement compared with the May 2014 session as regards the mean grade, although slightly fewer candidates received the very top marks. This continues a trend of slow but steady improvement from the May 2013 session, perhaps mainly due to teachers’ increasing familiarity with the interview procedure, and thus their ability to prepare candidates appropriately.

Candidate performance against each criterion (by level)

Higher Level

Criterion A: Productive skills

Most candidates displayed sufficient command of language to be able to communicate with some fluency and ease.

The best candidates had a wide range of vocabulary and phrasing, which they could use responsively and appropriately for a variety of interactive purposes. This excellent command was sometimes compromised by occasional habitual lapses in basics, or by ingrained problems in details of pronunciation.

In the middle of the range, command was usually correct and effective, if sometimes hesitant; and the range of vocabulary was sufficient for effective communication, if not particularly sophisticated.

Weaker candidates often had ‘laboured’ production of language: they communicated reasonably clearly, but with some effort. Range of vocabulary was limited, thus restricting precision, but basic grammar was often reasonably correct.

Very few candidates produced ‘fragmented’ language, where major weaknesses in grammar made communication and interaction difficult.

Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

Most candidates managed to produce reasonably clear and effective presentations, developing ideas about the stimulus photograph. However, at all levels, under half of the presentations gave evidence of having been clearly planned and structured (e.g. through a ‘map’ summarising ideas at the beginning).

Most presentations covered both description and commentary on the photograph; and the balance between these two functions was usually quite sensible (e.g. description 30%,

commentary 70%). A minority of candidates restricted themselves to very detailed description – thus denying themselves the opportunity to show how well they could handle complex ideas in commentary.

In the Part 2 interaction, the best candidates contributed actively, contributing new directions to the discussion, or ‘questioning the question’ in order to define terms. Middling candidates provided full and reasonably methodical answers to questions, but sometimes had a tendency to wait passively for the teacher to tell them what to talk about next, thus restricting the complexity of the exchange.

There were very few cases when the interaction broke down, due to language weaknesses or a failure to grasp the topic under discussion, and this is in part a tribute to the skills of teachers in sensitively guiding and supporting their weaker students.

Standard Level

Criterion A: Productive skills

Most candidates were able to use a very good command of language, maintaining fluency in both parts and using varied sophisticated vocabulary and structures. It was noticed this session that candidates benefitted noticeably from what had been discussed inside the classroom throughout the 2 years, which was reflected in the phrases and choice of words used as well as the supporting details presented. Some candidates seemed competent enough to produce language with the minimum number of errors observed.

Weaker candidates presented either flawed or fragmented structures at large with errors ranging from subject-verb agreement and singular/plural forms to using past tenses and prepositions. L1 influence and intonation hampering communication remain some serious problems. At times, well-selected photographs with rich graphic text helped generate a varied range of vocabulary and structures which enabled less able candidates to express their ideas and simple opinions.

Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

The majority of candidates were able to maintain a coherent conversation and express ideas and opinions clearly and, at several times, effectively. Weaker candidates failed to maintain simple coherent conversations. Despite the fact that many candidates were able to succinctly describe the photo and link it to the option and topic under discussion in a methodical way, there is still a good number of cases where mapping is non-existent or having Part 1 presentations mainly focused on factual superficial details or description of the photograph chosen.

Many candidates seemed active enough to direct the discussion to different angles, which helped the teacher to cover other related options. Weaker candidates, on the other hand, needed much prompting as their answers were restricted to ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ or very brief comments that lacked lucid explanations and vivid examples.

Just like in previous sessions, some candidates were prevented from providing full and active responses due to questions targeting factual information, focusing only on the details of the photograph, or them not being open enough to elicit personal viewpoints and opinions.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Handling of interview procedure

Teachers should pay close attention to the section 'Conduct of the interviews', and ensure that they avoid flaws there described. In particular:-

- ensure that candidates' presentations are limited to the 4 minutes required
- select photographs which are suitable, as specified in the Subject Guide
- strive to make their questions clear and short, aiming to encourage candidates to speak as much and as easily as possible

Linkage to target culture

Teachers should aim to include discussion of the target culture in the individual interview, as noted under Conduct of the Interviews.

Marking standards

As noted in previous years, teachers should:

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

Higher level Written Assignment

Component grade boundaries

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 4 | 5 - 8 | 9 - 12 | 13 - 15 | 16 - 17 | 18 - 20 | 21 - 24 |

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Candidates' performance in the written assignment this session was deemed good despite it being the first session of the revised component. Few candidates submitted hand-written

instead of word-processed tasks. Kindly note that any change made to any DP component is announced at least a year in advance and is heavily publicised on the OCC and in the Coordinator's notes.

Candidates seem to have enjoyed the task and most centres and candidates were aware of the requirements of the written assignment, which resulted in candidates submitting a range of appropriate assignments for assessment. Few assignments, however, were termed very good or excellent. The reasons for this were mainly poor rationales and content that either departed from or was not mentioned in the rationale.

Some candidates re-told the plot in a diary entry or letter to a friend. Others chose to write reviews of the whole work instead of choosing a specific focus for their assignment. Those, when not coupled by a rationale that explained the candidate's aim and provided concrete links between the task and the literary work, often did not score higher than 6 out of 10 in Criterion A. Re-telling the plot should be avoided; candidates should reflect on their understanding of the literary work and choose specific areas to explore further in their assignments.

Examiners noted that a few candidates wrote more than the stipulated 600 words, which meant that examiners stopped reading when they reached the upper limit. Additionally, in the revised Language B guide (for first examination in 2015), it is stated that a formal (literary) essay is not an acceptable text type for the written assignment. A few candidates chose the essay as their text type, which limited their mark in Criterion A (please refer to the *Language B Guide* and *The Handbook of Procedures*, 2015).

Kindly note that candidates must adhere to the requirements included on the written assignment coversheet and should not identify themselves by either writing their names or their candidate numbers on the written assignment.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale and task

Rationale

As the name of the criterion denotes, the task is marked in light of what is written in the rationale. The most common problem was that the ideas mentioned in the task were omitted from the rationale or, less commonly, vice-versa. To explain further, and while most candidates provided short introduction to the literary work in their rationales, they failed to mention how the task itself is connected to the literary work. Others provided lengthy summaries without highlighting the context of their tasks or choosing a specific focus. For example, some candidates mentioned that *Animal Farm* highlights power corruption and that the task will be either a diary entry of a character or a letter from one character to the other expressing feelings or concerns, without clarifying when the diary entry or the letter will be written and how the task's content is connected to the literary work. Aims were often provided but lacked focus. For example, a speech by Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* that aims to explore Christopher's feelings in general is too broad. How aims were achieved often lacked comments regarding the register that will be used in the task or why a specific register was used. Some even failed to mention who the audience is.

Task

A good number of tasks was creative but the majority was either sometimes linked or generally linked to the literary work as described in the rationale. The main reason for this is that most candidates presumed examiners were familiar with the literary work (which is no longer allowed because the task is marked in light of what is mentioned in the rationale) and failed to provide a synopsis of what will appear in the task in their rationales. In a good number of assignments, candidates showed careful consideration of the choice of the text type and audience, but some tried to disguise essays in the form of magazine articles and reviews in the form of personal letters. In addition, candidates lost marks in this criterion when they failed to clarify who the audience of their task was or what their aim was because suitability of text type to aim and purpose could not be determined (the 4th descriptor).

Criterion B: Organisation and development

Overall, candidates effectively organized their work and evidence of skilful planning was demonstrated. However, and in their attempt to include as much information taken from the literary work as possible in their tasks, some candidates sacrificed coherent development of ideas. In other cases, repetition dominated the task because the chosen focus was too narrow. For example, exploring a character's feeling of despair in a particular incident.

Criterion C: Language

Most candidates showed an adequate, sometimes effective, command of language in spite of many inaccuracies. A few candidates presented texts that were incoherent. Even if the command of language was just adequate, the message was mostly conveyed. Vocabulary was generally varied and used accurately, and complex structures were somewhat effectively used in many assignments; consequently, candidates gained relatively high marks in this criterion. There were, however, frequent errors in the use of narrative tenses, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, the formulation of a sentence, and phrasal verbs.

Similar to candidate performance in this criterion in previous sessions, linguistic appropriacy was often an issue, especially when candidates either failed to mention they were emulating the style of an author / character or provide examples of that style in their rationales.

The use of rhetorical devices was generally appropriate and sometimes effective. Those who included a summary of the literary work in letters or diary entries or wrote articles that largely read like essays lost marks in reference to this element of the criterion (the 3rd descriptor).

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should advise candidates to:

- Familiarise themselves with the requirements of the revised rationale. Language B guide specifies that in 150-250 words, the rationale should introduce the assignment and include:
 - a brief introduction to the literary text(s)

- an explanation of how the task is linked to the literary text(s)- this should not be general; specific links between task and work should be explained in some detail
- the student's intended aim(s)
- explanation of how the student intends to achieve his or her aim(s)—choice of text types, audience, register, style and so on.
- Choose a text type that will help them achieve their aim(s), and remember that the formulaic essay is not an acceptable text type.
- Choose a specific focus for their assignments, one that is neither too broad nor too narrow, and to use this focus to demonstrate understanding of the literary work.
- Create an assignment that is connected to the literary text(s) and provide this connection in the rationale.
- Focus on contextualizing their writing, for this would greatly enhance their written work and help them to write and organize their points effectively.
- Develop the ideas presented in the rationale in their tasks.
- Use a range of language appropriate to text type and communicative purpose in their tasks.
- Avoid the dangers of verbatim copying from the literary work and clearly to indicate where the copied parts appear.
- Limit their assignment to the prescribed minimum and maximum number of words (500-600).
- Not identify themselves or their centres if a personal coversheet is used.
- Make sure their rationale and tasks are word processed and presented in a continuous manner- leaving large blank spaces when typing should be avoided.

Standard level Written Assignment

Component grade boundaries

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 3 | 4 - 7 | 8 - 11 | 12 - 14 | 15 - 17 | 18 - 20 | 21 - 24 |

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Answers ranged from excellent pieces of writing approaching native-speaker level to scripts that had very weak rationales and whose arguments were difficult to follow.

There was a wide range of topics which included global warming, different types of discrimination, misleading advertising techniques, cyberbullying, Erasmus grants, autism, social media problems, internet addiction, poverty, waste of food and even arguing parents! Generally the new requirements were complied with, but see the suggestions for teaching below.

The most popular text types were blogs, letters / emails, articles, interviews and speeches.

One examiner noted that the scope of the aims was often too ambitious. For example, there were several assignments on global warming and many of these attempted to solve the whole problem worldwide. It is more effective to take one aspect of global warming such as the effects on health or to limit the context to one country, given that the task is only 400 words long.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale and Task

There was a range of performance in the rationale. The weakest part was the description of the sources. Sometimes the sources were not referred to at all. Rarely were they fully described.

There was also a range in the ways the source texts were used. Some sources clearly supplied ideas and information and were also quoted from. Other scripts hardly appeared to use the source texts at all.

Sometimes there was no mention of the sources even when in other respects the assignment was a very good one. This suggests that the candidate has either not been told to describe the sources or else has forgotten to do so.

The aim and audience must be clear and specific. So 'to talk about' or 'discuss' a topic are not convincing aims. A rather vague aim like 'My objective is to inform the general public' should be narrowed down to something more specific. For example 'I plan to persuade the parents of students in my school that...'

The context of text type and audience should be clearly defined. Strong candidates also mentioned the register and style to be adopted.

The subject was usually stated in the rationale, relevant to the sources and addressed throughout the task.

The chosen text type was sometimes inappropriate to the audience and aim. See the points made below in 'Further Comments' on the essay and the diary entry. However, the text type was usually realised effectively.

Criterion B: Organization and development

Generally this was well done. Paragraphing is always an indicator of clear organization, and most candidates used paragraphs effectively and organised their ideas logically. An overall plan was usually evident, and when there was a weakness it was usually in the development of ideas and arguments within the paragraphs. In some cases punctuation was weak, and this affected clarity.

In some text types there can be a preview of arguments at the start of the task and a review at the end: this is evidence of clear planning.

Criterion C: Language

Some strong candidates used very effective language with fluent expression of ideas. Weaker candidates had difficulties with complex structures which meant that the reader had to read some sentences two or three times before they became clear.

As regards the use of rhetorical devices, weaker candidates 'forgot' the text type as they went along although they had started well. The text type should be evident at the beginning, middle and end of the task.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Practise writing rationales. Use a checklist of required content e.g. topic, sources, aim, and how to achieve the aim (choice of text type, audience, register, style). The weakest aspect was the description of the sources: merely referring to them is not enough. The provenance (e.g. internet, newspaper), text type (article, interview) and author should be stated, and the main argument given (e.g. the author gives evidence of recent global warming in southern Europe).

Go through the descriptors of the assessment criteria with the candidates. This will make clear to them what the examiners are looking for.

Candidates must proofread their assignment before it is submitted. They must check spelling and grammar, and there should be no typing errors. They should remember that what they are submitting is an important part of their Diploma assessment.

Further comments

The assessment criteria for Criterion A make clear what the rationale should include. Sometimes the sources are described in the task but they must be described in the rationale.

There have also been some issues with certain text types.

The essay: This text type may be used in SL but it is difficult to contextualise convincingly. An essay is normally a pedagogic exercise written for the teacher. If a candidate writes an essay for the general public, the context is unconvincing. It would be better to write a newspaper or magazine article for specific readers.

Candidates should not use the word 'essay' as a general term to refer to any text type as in 'I am going to write an essay, and my essay is a blog.' An 'essay' is a specific text type.

The diary: The diary entry is normally read by the writer and no one else, so a diary entry to persuade people of a point of view is unrealistic. However, a diary entry to clarify the writer's own views and feelings on a topic is convincing.

Blogs: These should clearly be recognizable as blogs. There should be elements such as direct address of the readers, some reference to previous posts and perhaps an invitation to readers to comment on this one. There may be further elements such as the date and a title.

Brochures: A series of disconnected sections is not enough, however impressive the artwork may be. There should be a main heading, an introduction, a logical progression through the sections, and a conclusion.

Speeches: They must open with a greeting and close with a goodbye to the audience. There must be contact with the audience throughout: this may be achieved by direct address or rhetorical questions.

Interviews: These may be a transcript of what was said or the interview may be reported. In both cases there should be an introduction and conclusion describing the context.

A summary and analysis of the sources: This text type is not appropriate as it cannot be contextualised convincingly. What is the aim? Who is it for?

Sometimes no bibliography is given. This should be on the cover sheet AND at the end of the task.

Some tasks had no rationale. Others had the rationale as the first paragraph of the script, with no indication of where the task began. Although the instructions say that the rationale and task should be submitted as one document, they should be clearly separate within that document. The rationale should come first.

The maximum of 400 words must be observed for the task. If this is exceeded, the examiner draws a line after 400 words and only assesses the part within the word limit. Candidates should not give a word count of, for example, 415 words. They should edit their text and ensure that the word limit is met.

In general, candidates have performed well this session but there can be improvements. The requirements of the rationale and task should be met and the candidates should be made aware of the descriptors for each of the three assessment criteria.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 11 | 12 - 22 | 23 - 30 | 31 - 38 | 39 - 45 | 46 - 53 | 54 - 60 |

General comments

This session, 173 teachers submitted the G2 form. Taking the time to submit those forms is highly appreciated by the IB Assessment Centre in Cardiff because teachers' comments are

taken into consideration during grade award and their suggestions are valuable to both paper setters and the Grade Award team.

Both teachers and examiners thought that the paper was of a similar standard to that of May 2014. 94% of the teachers who completed the form thought the paper was at the appropriate difficulty level and the texts chosen were interesting, accessible to candidates and covered a range of Anglophone cultures. In addition, approximately 95% of the teachers who completed the G2 forms rated the clarity of wording and presentation of the paper either good, very good or excellent. Only 2 teachers deemed the clarity of wording and presentation of the paper as either poor or very poor.

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

Some examiners felt that candidates needed better preparation for questions that required close reading, understanding the meaning of a word or an expression in context, references, and inference.

A number of candidates had difficulty in handling vocabulary questions that demanded understanding of the word in context. Those candidates found Qs36 and 38 in particular difficult, most probably because they were looking for synonyms that had the same ending or form instead of showing understanding of the meaning of the word in the text.

As for references, candidates had difficulty in determining to whom or what the underlined words in the questions referred. A good number of candidates provided references in light of their understanding of the passage, instead of locating the appropriate reference in the text. For example, a number of candidates wrote 'viewers' as the answer to Q23 although the direct reference in the text is 'people'.

Surprisingly, the gap filling exercise in text B was not handled well by many candidates. Examiners reported that the exercise may have been problematic because candidates were not familiar with the concept of negative reviews.

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

Examiners mentioned that the examination paper did not present major problems for the majority of candidates: the average candidate was generally successful in selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of question types in the five texts. What is more, candidates were better able than previous sessions where the literary text is concerned, for a number of candidates showed understanding of the text itself and the idiomatic expressions used.

Contrary to previous sessions, the True/False with justification questions were handled quite well by a good number of candidates, who were able to provide the correct tick and the appropriate short quotations. The only question in the set that was not handled as well by candidates was Q22 because those candidates failed to include the full justification.

Most candidates were able to manage their time properly; few questions were left unanswered.

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

Qs 1-4: These were mostly answered correctly by a good number of candidates, with Q4 being the most difficult one because some candidates failed to identify the exact phrase required for the answer. The mistakes in those questions ranged from copying the whole sentence “holding the meeting... less frightening” in Q4, and/ or adding ‘while at another’ to ‘a boy sat hunched with his head down’, or providing ‘sat hunched’ and ‘with his head down’ on two different lines for Q3.

Q5: Most candidate got at least 3 out of 5 correct, but D seemed to be the most elusive. A number of candidates gave J as a correct answer, showing lack of understanding of ‘over’.

Qs 6-9: The set was generally accessible to most candidates. Q6 posed some problems to candidates, who gave C as the answer instead of F.

Q10: Average to good candidates found little difficulty with this question, and the most common cause for not scoring a point was adding ‘represent Pakistani people’ to the answer.

Q11: this question was demanding to some candidates, who provided the description of Siddiqui’s comics instead of comics in general.

Q12: the majority of candidates gave the correct answer to this question.

Qs 13-17: A demanding set for a number of candidates who, as mentioned earlier, may not be familiar with negative reviews.

Qs 18- 22: Deemed of medium difficulty by the awarding team; most candidates managed to score at least 4 out of 5 in this set. The most demanding question in the set was Q22 because, as mentioned earlier, candidates failed to write down the full justification.

Qs 23-27: The set was deemed of medium difficulty by the awarding team. Candidates, however, seemed to err on the side of specificity and tried to provide details that were not required for the answer (e.g. Q 23). A number of variations that were considered correct were given for Q24, such as ‘the question about the future of books’ and ‘the query about the future of books’.

Qs 28-30: A few candidates failed to give the correct answers for Qs 28 and 30. The most demanding in the set was Q29, and almost all the options appeared as answers.

Qs 31-34: Average to good candidates found little difficulty with this set. Some candidates wrote the whole sentence for Q31 but were given the mark. Some candidate added ‘came in handy’ to the answer of Q32, while others added ‘parts’ to ‘the telephone’ in Q33.

Qs 35-39: The set proved to be difficult to most candidates, who, it seems, relied on finding synonyms using grammatical clues instead of understanding the meaning of the required word in context.

Qs 40-44: The set was generally accessible to most candidates, with Q42 being the most challenging. It seems the idea of being fixated on something was not understood by some candidates. This, coupled with misunderstanding 'hardly' in D, meant it was the most popular option.

Qs 45-47: Although these questions were accessible to candidates, a number of candidates failed to give the correct answers. The most common reason for losing the mark in Q45 was failing to mention to include 'considered' in the answer.

Qs 48-50: These sets were accessible to the majority of candidates, who answered at least 5 out of 6 correctly.

Qs 51 & 52: These proved to be accessible for a good number of candidates.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Please do not encourage candidates to provide 'markscheme' answers with parts of the answer appearing between parentheses. Examiners are instructed to mark the whole answer, including the additional part, and candidates are not given the benefit of the doubt when deploying this trick to gain unfair advantage.

Candidates should be advised to look for the direct reference in the text. They should not provide an 'inferred' one if a direct one is given in the text.

Teachers are advised to educate candidates how to determine the effect of context on meaning. This will help prepare candidates for reference, vocabulary and gap filling exercises.

When handling True/ False with justification questions, please remind candidates that a tick is required, all parts of the statement must be justified, and the crucial words in the quotation used to justify a true or a false statement must not be omitted.

In questions where a letter is required, candidates **MUST** write their answer clearly, for unclear answers will **NOT** be awarded the mark. Among ambiguous answers are C/G, E/F, E/L, I/J, and B/D.

Candidates should be warned against providing multiple answers for short-answer questions; this does not demonstrate understanding of the question and text and is, therefore, not awarded the mark. Candidates **MUST** cross out clearly anything they do not wish to be marked.

Teachers should emphasise the importance of judicious consideration of the requirements of each question to determine when a problem could result from providing either too many words or too few as an answer. Where "one" detail is required, a candidate who gives more than one runs the risk of losing the mark: even if one answer is correct, if there is also an incorrect

response, no mark will be awarded. Where “one phrase” is required, candidates run the same risk when providing the whole sentence.

Handwriting remains a serious problem. Teachers should advise candidates to pay extra attention to the legibility of their responses.

When an answer is written outside the box provided in the Question and Answer booklet, the candidate must indicate where the answer appears (e.g. ‘please see attached paper’).

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 7 | 8 - 14 | 15 - 22 | 23 - 27 | 28 - 32 | 33 - 37 | 38 - 45 |

General comments

50 teachers completed G2 forms compared with 29 in May 2014. Although this is a much better response, 266 centres prepared candidates and so even more feedback would be welcome in the next session. Teachers’ comments are needed on texts and questions which worked successfully as well as on those which caused difficulty. All feedback is useful when awarding the grades, setting future papers and also when compiling this report, so many thanks go to all those who took the time to submit their comments this session.

90% of teachers felt the paper was of appropriate difficulty. As regards the clarity of the wording, 94% felt it was good, very good or excellent. For the presentation of the paper, the figure was 98%.

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

Teachers are recommended to look at the markscheme when this becomes available. The requirements of the markscheme determine the difficulty of a paper as well as the language of the texts and the demands of the questions.

Among the most difficult questions were:

The ‘phrase’ questions. The markscheme makes clear exactly what to accept when ‘a phrase’ is required, and questions 5 and 10 are examples. The phrase is usually short and is never a complete sentence. Candidates often include extra words before or after the correct phrase and thus lose the mark.

The True/False with justification questions (Qs 13-16). These are always demanding as it is easy to write the correct justification and tick the wrong T/F box or vice versa. Q16 was the least difficult but even here some answers mentioned the trip to the Galapagos when all that was needed was the reference to the money '\$50,000 in scholarship funding'.

The reference questions (Qs 31-34). These were done better than usual. See the comment in the section on individual questions.

The gap fill with single words (Qs 20-23). Candidates should re-read the sentences when they have chosen the words and check if they are logical and grammatically appropriate.

Two short answer questions, Q28 and Q29, were also found to be difficult. In Q29 the word 'new' is important, and this is another example of the importance of reading the question carefully.

In Paper 1, candidates have to understand the questions as well as understand the texts, and all question types should be practised in class.

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

Nearly all candidates managed the time well and finished the paper. Few answers were left blank. In general all the question types were tackled reasonably well though the ones mentioned in the previous section are cases where strategies can be improved.

The pronoun reference questions (Qs 31-34) were done more successfully than in previous sessions.

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

Qs 1-4: These questions were easy to medium, with the exception of Q3. This question was medium to difficult and many candidates incorrectly gave G as the answer.

Qs 5-8: These were either easy or medium, except Q5, which proved difficult because candidates often added irrelevant words.

Q9: This question was easy and most chose the correct option.

Qs 10-12: Q10 was hard because many candidates added extra words. Qs 11 and 12 did not pose problems for the majority of candidates.

Qs 13-16: True/False with justification questions. As always, these questions are difficult because candidates have to a) get both parts correct and b) give a justification that is neither too long nor too short. Q16 was slightly easier than the others but some candidates added irrelevant information here too. The justification must cover exactly the sentence given in the question.

Qs 17-19: These were all medium to easy.

Qs 20-23: Gap-fill exercise. Qs20-22 were of medium difficulty but Q23 was found to be more difficult.

Qs 24-27: Of medium difficulty.

Qs 28-30: Qs28 and 29 proved difficult. In Q8, 'more' was required in all possible answers, and the 'new' in the question in Q29 was important.

Qs 31-34: Reference questions. Qs 31, 32 and 34 were of medium difficulty. Q33 was hard, and some put 'polar bears'. This answer may not be as illogical as it looks, and there is some reason in thinking the reference is to the 'hunting of polar bears' rather than 'hunting by man'. None the less, the answer was not correct.

Qs 35-37: These were all of medium difficulty.

Q38: Also of medium difficulty.

Qs 39-41: These questions were medium to hard.

Qs 42 & 43: These were medium questions. In Q42, many candidates did not know the meaning of 'threaten'.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is essential to practise the different question types so that the candidates are familiar with the strategies for answering them. This applies especially to True/False with justification, filling the gaps, and the grammar reference questions.

In the True/False with justification questions the answer must be an exact quotation from the text. A paraphrase is not acceptable.

Candidates should answer every question. Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers, and so it does not make sense to leave an answer blank.

Candidates should read the questions carefully especially those requiring a short answer.

If one item is asked for, only one item should be given e.g. Q28, 'Give **one** condition...' If a second item is given, and it is incorrect, the mark is not awarded.

When a phrase from the text is required, it is usually short and should be no more or less than the meaning given in the question. An example is Q10. The correct answer is simply 'the difference between life and death'.

Whole sentences are not needed in the short answers. So for Q6 'Why should a nametag be worn on the right-hand side?' it is not necessary to write 'A nametag should be worn on the

right-hand side so it is in perfect view of the other person.’ ‘So it is in perfect view of the other person.’ is sufficient.

Candidates should make the answers clear. For answers requiring a letter in a box, they should not produce a mix of two letters. This sometimes happens with E and F, or with A and D. If the answer cannot be read then the mark cannot be given.

If the letter is outside but next to the box, it must be clear. If it is on a separate sheet, this must be indicated (for example, “**please see attached paper**”). However, extra sheets should be used only if really necessary. Some candidates attached four additional sheets with a one-word answer on the first. This word could have been written on the original Q and A booklet.

Candidates should never make use of three dots (...) to indicate omitted words. The required quotations in the True/False + justification questions are never long, and if vital information is not given but is merely represented by the three dots, the mark is not given.

Candidates should **not** underline parts of their answer. This is never necessary and can lead to a loss of marks if the incorrect words are underlined.

Finally, some examiners mentioned handwriting that is difficult to read. Please remind candidates to write clearly, particularly in examination papers.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 7 | 8 - 14 | 15 - 19 | 20 - 26 | 27 - 32 | 33 - 39 | 40 - 45 |

General comments

Overall performance in this session was slightly better than in the May 2014 session. Command of the language was generally quite sound: there seemed to be slightly fewer cases where significant flaws obscured meaning, while at the top end there were quite a few candidates who displayed a wide range of vocabulary and structure, skilfully deployed. The tasks were usually handled methodically and in relevant ways. Text types were almost always at least recognisable, and in many cases clearly so.

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

Section A

Proposal text type: The text type required in Q4 was specifically a 'proposal', the first time that this text type had been set in Paper 2 since the introduction of the new Subject Guide. A good proposal should use structural features such as headings, bullet points, and so on; and organise the ideas methodically, clearly directed to persuading a specific audience. Few scripts showed these features.

Clear and coherent logical argument: Attention was drawn to weaknesses in this area in the May 2014 report. Some improvement seems to be detectable among this year's candidates, specifically in Qs 3 and 5. The Q3 task dealing with dietary supplements stimulated some quite lucid explanation of the dangerous effects of such supplements, demonstrating good cause and effect reasoning, and the Q5 task about the relative benefits of different sciences stimulated some clear reasoning supported by appropriate evidence.

Despite these welcome signs of a certain improvement, many scripts were filled with blunt assertions, without much linkage between statements, and without clearly relevant support. Teachers should continue to work in this area.

Section B

The Text Type Issue: Attention was drawn to this area in the May 2014 report: "...a significant number of candidates wasted time and space, and thus marks, in establishing the text type..." Fewer scripts displayed this weakness this year, but teachers should encourage the candidates to concentrate on producing clear, well-linked explanatory prose, whichever text type they choose.

The 'Reasoned Argument' Issue: The May 2014 report also mentioned the problems of 'Clear and coherent logical argument' mentioned under Section A, above, as applied to responses to the stimulus. Again, there appears to have been some improvement in this area, but teachers should continue to emphasise that what the Subject Guide explicitly requires (p.41) is "reasoned argument", and teach the language resources and thinking skills necessary to handle such argument well.

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

Section A

General handling of text types: Improvement in candidates' knowledge of the conventions, and of their ability to handle them, was noted in May 2014 and has evidently continued. It appears that the essential conventions of the text types have been well taught.

General command of language: The majority of candidates at least communicated reasonably clearly. The better candidates often displayed a sophisticated range of vocabulary and phrasing, authentically expressed, with perhaps a few slips in usage or influences of the L1 language. The weaker candidates often displayed a range of language adequate to express basic ideas, although flawed by recurrent errors in basics.

Section B

Relevance to the stimulus: More candidates than in previous sessions appeared to (a) grasp the central issue raised by the stimulus, and (b) develop reasoned arguments in fairly coherent ways. However, as mentioned under 'Areas candidates found difficult', above, there is still significant room for improvement in this area of lucidly reasoned argument.

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

Section A

Take-up of questions appeared to be somewhat more balanced than previous years. The only conspicuously unpopular question was Q4. This question probably deterred candidates because it required an uncommon text type (proposal), and addressed the slightly unclear concept of 'learning through entertainment' (see discussion of these issues under Q4, below). The most popular questions appeared to be Q2 and Q3.

Question 1: Cultural diversity – Article

This task was not particularly well done. Typically, an introduction stated that the film was really interesting, but the description of how the characters communicated very rarely bore this out – usually there was mention of sign language and little more detail. The reflection on the need for language was generally better handled, but rarely rose above the obvious. There were very few scripts that presented any idea which should have grown out of a Theory of Knowledge consideration of language; and even fewer which made any clear mention of cultural diversity. Overall, then, candidates carried out the basic requirements of the task but with little real insight into language, or real rigour in developing arguments.

The 'article' text type was handled, in most cases, at least recognisably, in that there would be a title, some form of an engaging introduction, and at least an attempt at a lively journalistic style.

Question 2: Customs and traditions – E-mail

There was a wide range of quality in the responses to this task, from the thin and superficial to the thorough and perceptive. A majority of the responses were competent in one element of the task but not the other: for instance, the description might be quite detailed, but the reasons why were barely mentioned. The weakest responses digressed into practical details of the party itself, and what fun it was going to be. In other words, clear focus on the specified task was often a problem.

It is worth noting that while this may be seen as an 'easy' task in that any candidate might attempt it, it was evidently not an easy task to do well. In other words, it discriminated well between more and less able candidates.

The 'e-mail' text type was generally well handled. Most candidates managed to combine informal chat with a slightly more formal register when describing and explaining.

Question 3: Health – Talk

This most popular task was at least competently handled by most candidates who attempted it. In most cases there was adequate coverage of the two required elements, ‘warning’ and ‘suggestions’. Better candidates appeared quite well informed about the nature and effects of dietary supplements (whereas some candidates very evidently knew insufficient, or lacked imagination, to be able to construct an effective case). Most were able to make practical suggestions on the basis of overall ‘healthy living’. In a minority of cases, candidates digressed from the requirements of the task to discuss issues which were only vaguely related, such as eating disorders or fashions in body image. Such lack of focus on the task simply lost marks.

The ‘talk’ text type was well handled by almost all candidates. Most scripts opened with some form of direct address to the audience, and only a few then lapsed into an impersonal ‘essay’ style. Very few used excessively informal language, most adopting a relatively serious register in order to be able to express ideas clearly. There was some skilful use of rhetorical techniques, such as questions or vivid comparisons.

Question 4: Leisure – Proposal

This was the least popular of the tasks, probably for two reasons: the nature of the task, and the unfamiliar text type.

Firstly, the key phrase in the question is “education through entertainment” – but ‘entertainment’ may have two interpretations: education through using the products of the entertainment business (films, music, computer games, etc.); or education by using entertaining techniques. At the Standardisation meeting, this ambiguity was recognised, and so either interpretation was deemed acceptable. In fact, most candidates who attempted this question mainly focused on the second interpretation, but also incorporated something of the first. However, it is likely that some uncertainty about the meaning of ‘entertainment’ may have put off a number of candidates.

Secondly, the ‘proposal’ text type is only required at Higher level, and has not been set for any Paper 2 since the introduction of the new Subject Guide. This may mean that some teachers have not paid much attention to the text type, or that candidates were deterred by its unfamiliarity.

The ‘proposal’ text type was handled with mixed success. A minority of candidates handled it well, using structural features such as headings, bullet points, and so on; and organised the ideas methodically, clearly directed to persuading a specific audience. The majority produced a rather formless letter, with a poor sense of overall structure, and even uncertainty as to whom the arguments were addressed (perhaps the school board ... or teachers ... or fellow students?)

Question 5: Science and technology – Blog

Most examples of this task were handled quite skilfully. The overall point of view was usually made very clear, and was under-pinned competently by some developed arguments. More capable candidates selected relevant and appropriate examples: most of those arguing for the value of the natural sciences drew on developments on medical knowledge, with a few referring

to the importance of climate change for the 21st century. There was little discussion of what exactly was meant by 'beneficial': such defining of terms would have indicated capacity to handle complex ideas, and given a more solid basis for value judgements. Perhaps surprisingly, the most convincing scripts supported the value of the natural sciences; relatively few partisans of the social sciences did much apart from refer to 'learning from history'.

The 'blog' text type was generally handled well, suggesting that most candidates were familiar with how blogs are actually written and for what purposes. There was usually a sense of the writer engaging with a group of regular followers, and of wishing to promote argument and comment. Register was usually handled well, largely semi-formal clarity with dashes of chatty informality. A few candidates lost a mark for not providing a title.

Section B

In contrast with the May 2014 stimulus (about the news) which had three significant elements, the key issue in this stimulus was two-fold – 'acceptance by others' versus 'accepting yourself'. This simple structure made the task accessible, as did the whole subject area, dealing with issues which young people have directly experienced. Most candidates opted for the idea that 'happiness depends on accepting yourself' – to quite egocentric extremes at times ("the only thing that matters is what you think"!); relatively few argued that social acceptance is important.

Overall, most candidates presented a clear point of view, and made some attempt to explain it in detail. However, this mostly took the form of blunt assertions, rather than clearly reasoned arguments. There was also a marked tendency to ignore the other side of the stimulus: intelligent and skilful rebuttal was very rare. Many candidates made an attempt to define 'happiness', sensibly enough, but this regularly led to lengthy digressions, distracting from the central issues. Quite often, personal experience was used, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. A very limited number wrote unconventional 'fictional' pieces, such as diary entries, to illustrate the issue – sparks of imaginative approach that were rare, but often successful.

There were noticeably fewer cases of candidates wasting words and effort on 'establishing the text type' (e.g. irrelevant chat to show that the text was an e-mail). Many candidates simply wrote direct explanatory prose. Where text types had obviously been deliberately chosen, these were usually quite appropriate (e.g. blog, speech, reflective diary entry).

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

On the basis of performance in this session's Paper 2, teachers are advised to pay particular attention to the following areas:

Language

The majority of candidates in English B HL evidently have sufficient language resources to be able to communicate relatively clearly and easily. However, slips and flaws are evident at all levels apart from the very top of the range. Accordingly teachers should:

- alert each individual candidates to recurrent errors, encouraging conscious self-correction
- encourage accurate use of vocabulary and idiom, by discussing the precise meaning of words in context
- provide targeted language expansion, particularly in the areas of complex linkers, modifiers, and sentence structure.

Message

Success in Paper 2 involves focusing precisely and methodically on the required task. Accordingly, teachers should teach:

- the use of critical thinking
- careful planning and organisation of the sequence of ideas.

Text type

Teachers should make sure that all text types are analysed, understood, and practised (if possible, at least twice).

Section B

More and better preparation is required for this actually quite demanding task. Candidates should be strongly encouraged to -

- avoid devoting any words to 'establishing the text type'
- concentrate on writing a 'reasoned argument', which means that they should ...
 - think critically about the central issue, and ...
 - link methodically and clearly the key points of their ideas.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mark range: | 0 - 4 | 5 - 9 | 10 - 13 | 14 - 16 | 17 - 18 | 19 - 22 | 23 - 25 |

General comments

The International Baccalaureate would like to thank the 50 teachers who completed the G2 Form on the OCC. Approximately 80% of the respondents considered the paper of a similar standard to that of May 2014, and 98% deemed its difficulty level appropriate. Clarity of wording and the presentation of the paper were considered good to excellent by the majority of teachers

who completed the form. As usual, we always encourage teachers to submit their comments and brief explanations as those are taken into consideration by paper setters and the Grade Award team.

Overall, questions seemed accessible in a way that most candidates were able to relate to the topics presented. At the top end of the range, there were some focused and creative responses that presented ideas methodically and intelligently with very few significant errors. At the bottom end, there were some responses that demonstrated lack of coherence as well as several basic errors in simple and complex structures.

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

Criterion A: Language

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

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

Criterion B: Message

A good number of candidates effectively and clearly organized their ideas, using paragraphing and cohesive devices appropriately. In weaker scripts there was no logical argument revealed. An argument should proceed step by step, and the points should be supported by evidence. This was required particularly in Qs 1, 4 and 5. This ability to produce a coherent argument distinguished the best answers which developed the argument in separate paragraphs and supported it with specific points and examples rather than talking in general.

Some questions asked for two aspects to be covered, such as 'describing your goal and the progress your group is making' in Q4. Candidates should address each of these required topics clearly; otherwise, scripts are marked down on relevance of ideas in Criterion B. Underlining the required aspects on the question paper may help to remind candidates of what elements they should cover.

Criterion C: Format

Similarly to last session, examiners commented that the vast majority of candidates produced the required text types effectively, in terms of conventions, layout or register. It was only in few cases where a very chatty style and informal register was used in Q1 or that the blog entry in Q4 and the essay in Q2 was missing a relevant title.

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

All questions were attempted by candidates with Qs 1, 2 and 5 being the most popular, followed closely by Q4. Q3 was attempted by a good number of candidates but statically comes with a fewer percentage compared to the rest.

Question 1: Cultural diversity – Letter to the Editor

This question has proved to be the most popular one. The very good responses managed to make their opinions clear while focusing on the financial aspects of the proposal and providing adequate supporting details.

While the majority were able to produce an effective letter in terms of register, tone, etc., many failed to address the "free of charge" element, and thus ended up supporting their viewpoint - be it balanced or one-sided - with points and supporting details pertinent to cultural diversity in general. Such general responses were marked down under "relevance" in Criterion B. Better able candidates produced clever arguments that focused on the financial aspect and the consequences of such a proposal in a very convincing way.

The majority of candidates used an appropriate register and tone and included appropriate formal greeting and closing salutations. However, some few scripts used a very informal style or failed to include a distinguishing feature of a well-realized letter: an ending that avoids abruptness, such as 'Looking forward to hearing from you, etc.'

Question 2: Customs and traditions – Essay

This proved to be another popular question which revealed candidates' ability to produce a recognizable essay with effective conventions. Some responses addressed globalization or celebrations in general rather than the relationship between commercialization and celebrations in particular, and thus resulted in factual descriptions of celebrations and festivities which in some cases were coupled with a lot of rambling, repetitions and little coherence. Those were marked down under 'relevance' in Criterion B.

The majority of candidates used an appropriate register with a distinct introduction, development and conclusion. However, many candidates copied the main stimulus in the question and used it as a title. Only in few cases there seemed to be no effective stylistic devices used to allow following the message easily.

Question 3: Health – Leaflet

Despite the accessibility of this question, it has proved to be the least popular prompt. When attempted, the question was handled generally well though there seemed to be an over-

emphasis on the artistic part of the leaflet which came at the expense of content. Good scripts, however, explored many interesting fun ways to exercise and produced authentic leaflets that grabbed readers' attention.

Some responses addressed causes and symptoms of a lack of exercise rather than fun activities young people could participate in, while other candidates focused on mental exercise when the question clearly states 'physical'. Accordingly, those two were marked down under 'relevance' in Criterion B.'

Question 4: Leisure – Blog Entry

Successful blogs were generally authentic and effective. Most candidates managed to focus on both parts (goals and progress made) along with a very interesting approach to clarify benefits to the local community, funding and other ideas. Some candidates produced more than one entry and managed to express their ideas quite coherently, while others failed to organize ideas and provide some reflections, which resulted in narratives with lots of rambling and repetitions.

Some blog entries read like essays or articles with no awareness of the readers revealed. Better responses, however, provided an engaging title and used a lively interesting style to engage the audience or invite them to comment towards the end.

Question 5: Science and technology – Article

This was the most popular question by far and probably the most effective one produced by those attempting it. It was quite evident that candidates who attempted this task knew their strengths as they explored several factual details and used technical vocabulary that helped them achieve the top marks.

The majority of responses addressed both advantages and disadvantages and supported viewpoints with interesting details and examples. Weaker candidates basically rambled about fossil fuels or failed to provide appropriate supporting details as they went repetitive.

Almost all articles produced were accompanied with a relevant title and had a distinct introduction, development and conclusion. Only few candidates, however, adopted a lively style.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates are advised to:

- carefully read all parts of the question and underline the essential aspects.
- maintain a legible handwriting.
- use correct paragraphing and punctuation marks.
- avoid by any means writing the same response twice OR attempting two different questions without indicating if one of those is a draft. This may seriously place them at a disadvantage.

Teachers are advised to:

- frequently address significant grammar errors.
- practise with candidates how to develop ideas coherently and effectively.