

November 2017 subject reports

## English B

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 14	15 - 28	29 - 44	45 - 59	60 - 71	72 - 86	87 - 100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 12	13 - 27	28 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 69	70 - 83	84 - 100

### Higher level and Standard level Internal Assessment

#### Component grade boundaries HL

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

#### Component grade boundaries SL

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

## The range and suitability of the work submitted (HL and SL)

At Higher level, the marks achieved in this component this year was slightly lower than those of previous years. This seemed largely due to an increase in the proportion of candidates from new schools.

That said, most candidates demonstrated sufficient command of the language to be able to communicate ideas at least competently; even those candidates that had obvious limitations in their command of the language usually managed to maintain a coherent conversation. Only a small minority had such fundamental weaknesses in language as to have serious problems in understanding and expressing ideas.

At Standard level, most candidates demonstrated sufficient command of the language to be able to communicate ideas at least competently. The majority performed fairly well in terms of basic language production and were capable of maintaining a coherent conversation about different topics. This is in line, in general terms, with performance in previous sessions.

## Candidate performance against each criterion (HL)

### **Criterion A: Productive skills**

The majority of candidates are capable of communicating reasonably effectively and fairly fluently. Pronunciation was usually clear, once one got attuned to idiosyncrasies of individual candidates: only a few of the weakest presented serious difficulties of comprehension. A number of candidates in the middle of the range seemed to have favoured a 'slow but steady' approach; their production was a little laboured, but this may have been a sensible effort to try to get the language right. There was little evidence of wide and sophisticated vocabulary, apart from the obviously most able candidates. However, some of the smarter candidates in the middle of the range were capable of making clever phrases out of limited vocabulary.

### **Criterion B: Receptive and interactive skills**

The majority of Part 1 presentations were effective enough. Candidates were perhaps slightly more methodical in their approach to describing the picture and the caption, and a few more who used a 'map' to give structure to the presentation. In the Part 2 interactions, most candidates responded promptly enough to questions, indicating that comprehension did not seem to be a problem. At the top end of the scale, there were some clever, interesting, intellectually agile candidates who were a pleasure to listen to. The majority of candidates, in the middle of the range, produced and discussed relevant ideas, but often at a fairly simple level; many seemed to stick with the safety of rather obvious opinions and ideas, with little evidence of critical thinking (and sometimes teachers' questions did little to challenge and stimulate more complex discussions).

## Candidate performance against each criterion (SL)

### **Criterion A: Productive skills**

Candidates managed to easily produce language generally but using basic vocabulary and structures. As usual, there is a group of extremely fluent candidates at the very top of the SL range, who speak with great ease revealing an excellent command of the language. At the lower levels of performance, candidates struggled with language or produced it with laboured fluency, but even in those cases, there seemed a fairly good range of vocabulary used with clear speech constructed. It was noticed that some candidates lack the varied language tools and idiomatic expressions to express ideas clearly and effectively at large.

In many cases intonation was quite expressive and effective. It was in few cases when candidates' pronunciation obscured meaning, causing confusion overall.

Errors ranged from subject-verb agreement and singular/plural forms to using past tenses and prepositions. Still, such errors did not hamper communication generally.

### **Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills**

Overall, candidates were able to express ideas and opinions independently, maintaining a natural flow of conversation with a coherent exchange of ideas. There was some indication that candidates were prepared to give full answers, to do more than give a simple basic response. At times, that was not the case due to some teachers focusing on factual knowledge which prevented candidates from remaining active as they did not know what to say.

A good number understood cues of questions and managed a decently coherent (but at times basic) conversation with the teacher. Other few candidates seemed more active 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.

Most candidates replied promptly and provided relevant and well-developed responses. Some candidates revealed the ability to provide opinions and ideas with a degree of depth and complexity. It is worth mentioning that due to the supportive teachers and varied question techniques, weaker candidates were able to maintain a decent conversation and express simple ideas clearly and coherently.

Many presentations lacked mapping and did not focus on substantial ideas linked to topic or option, but rather focused on photo description or about personal issues at a basic level. It was in the discussion when they did somewhat better.

## **Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates (HL and SL)**

During the course, teachers should:

- strive to make their questions clear and short, aiming to encourage candidates to speak as much and as easily as possible
- strive to ensure that their students have as much practice as possible in lively, genuine, engaged conversations in the classroom. This will involve a careful balance between spontaneous interaction through speech, encouraging students to express themselves freely and confidently, and interventions from the teacher to guide and train each

student's linguistic and communicative skills.

- focus on correcting flaws in expression: the teacher should progressively correct errors in a student's language use, and encourage the use of an ever-wider range of vocabulary and phrasing. Making a student aware of his or her common slips in language use should lead to the development of self-correction.
- help students practise mapping out and organising their ideas in Part 1 while linking photo to caption and option. Practice in the use of notes to organise presentations during the course should naturally lead to a more organised pattern of ideas in spontaneous conversation

For the individual oral examinations, teachers should:

- ensure that the images chosen are 'real' photographs: *ie* they should be unaltered images of real life, and not images which have been 'photoshopped', or collages. Nor should they be graphic images, such as cartoons or advertisements.
- ensure students make reference to Anglophone culture: A majority of centres in this session still failed to include any reference to the target Anglophone culture in the interviews. The instructions in the Language B Guide are clear: in Part 1, "The student describes the photograph and relates it to the option and the target culture(s)." (HL p.59); and in the Part 2 discussion, candidates should be encouraged and enabled to express "ideas, opinions and reflections upon what they have learned about the target culture(s)." (HL p.60).
- choose captions that are interesting and stimulating to quickly and directly guide candidates to option and topic under discussion.
- ensure that candidates' presentations are limited to the 4 minutes required.

## Higher level Written Assignment

### Component grade boundaries

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general, the quality of the written assignments submitted for assessment this session ranged between good and very good.

More candidates demonstrated awareness of the requirements of the written assignment, which resulted in candidates submitting a range of assignments for assessment, most of which were

considered appropriate. However, poor rationales remain to be the main reason why some candidates did not score well in the written assignment.

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, and as per the instructions stated in the Language B Guide (for first examination in 2015), 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 the third descriptor of Criterion A to 2 (please refer to the Language B Guide and The Assessment Procedures).

In addition, examiners recommend that attention be paid to the choice of literary work. In general, poetry and symbolic short stories did not work well in the written assignment, and only the very able candidates were able to use a Shakespearian text as point of departure for the written assignment.

Few candidates submitted the 2/BWA form, which is no longer to be submitted with the assignments. Candidates, however, are required to include the word counts for the rationale and the task separately after each part.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: Rationale and task

**Rationale:** The rationales offered this session were to some extent lacking. Some provided a lengthy summary of the lit work used but failed to identify an aim or describe how that aim will be achieved. Others delved immediately into the aim and how it will be achieved without mentioning anything about the literary work, and in some cases, not even its title. The low marks in this criterion can generally be attributed to the lack of 'agreement' between the rationale and the task. To explain further, several assignments lacked a clear, specific aim; most aims were broad, and some were vague. For example, many candidates mentioned they wanted to explore the feelings of a certain character or to highlight the importance of a certain symbol without clarifying what those feelings are or what the chosen symbol is. A few candidates wrote a personal reflection of the task in the rationale without clearly identifying either an aim or a focus for their tasks.

In some instances, the context of the task was missing. For example, some candidates gave a general summary of the literary work that was not connected to the focus of their tasks. Others paid particular attention to how they will achieve the text type without giving specific connection between their tasks and the literary work.

As in previous sessions, the most common problem was that the ideas mentioned in the task were omitted from the rationale or, less commonly, vice-versa. A candidate would give an aim and a text type, but not provide a synopsis of the ideas that would appear in the task. Sometimes, the ideas mentioned in the rationale were not explored further in the task. In other cases, a detailed summary of the literary work was provided but hardly any connection between the work and the task.

Please note that the rationale is a very important component of the written assignment. The task is marked in light of what is mentioned in the rationale, and examiners are **not** allowed to familiarize themselves with the literary work. Therefore, the requirements of the rationale that are mentioned in the guide must be adhered to, and the candidate should map out the task in the rationale.

**Task:** In a number of cases, most of the ideas mentioned in the tasks were **not** provided in the rationale. As mentioned earlier, examiners are not allowed to take their familiarity with the literary work into consideration when assessing the written assignment because the task is assessed against what is given in the rationale.

Generally, candidates showed careful consideration to the choice of text type and audience, but some tried to disguise essays in the form of magazine articles and reviews in the form of personal letters. Others wrote diary entries to clarify to 'readers' or 'parties interested' the feelings of a certain character.

Additionally, candidates lost marks in the fourth descriptor of Criterion A 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 audience could not be determined. An example of this is not providing an audience when an interview was chosen as a text type.

### Criterion B: Organization and development

Overall, candidates generally organized their work and developed their ideas. Some candidates wrote their tasks without carefully planning how their ideas were going to be presented. This resulted in a number of main ideas being provided without being effectively developed, or much repetition of the same idea.

### Criterion C: Language

Most candidates showed somewhat effective command of language in spite of some inaccuracies that obscured meaning at times. However, in some assignments, there were many basic grammatical errors and a general lack of linguistic competence, complete with repetitive vocabulary and incoherent structures. Examiners often commented that candidates used a wide range of vocabulary, but that this use was sometimes either inaccurate or ineffective. Complex structures were not always deployed for effect. There were frequent errors in the use of narrative tenses, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, the formulation of a sentence, and phrasal verbs.

As noted in previous sessions, linguistic appropriacy was often an issue, especially when candidates either failed to mention they were emulating the style of an author or character and provide examples of that style in their rationales.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should advise students to:

- **avoid** including any form of **identification**- either personal or by using school's official paper- in their assignments.
- provide a bibliography at the end of the task.
- pay specific attention to the requirements of the rationale. The 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)— in novels, for example, a summary of the specific part on which the assignment is based is required.
  - 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)— context, choice of text type, audience, register, style and so on.
- practise writing rationales and use the rationale to map out what will be included in the task; the clearer and more detailed the rationale is, the easier it is to gain marks in Criterion A.
- 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) as described in the rationale. In other words, candidates **should** develop the ideas provided 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.
- use a range of language appropriate to text type and communicative purpose in their tasks.
- limit their assignment to the prescribed minimum and maximum number of words (500-600).
- avoid the **dangers of verbatim copying** from the literary work and clearly indicate where the copied parts appear. When ideas that appear in any source are copied or paraphrased, they should be clearly cited, **images included**.

## Standard level Written Assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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**Mark range:**            0 - 3            4 - 7            8 - 11            12 - 14            15 - 17            18 - 20            21 - 24

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of work submitted was generally suitable in terms of topics and text types selected, though quality was lacking in many cases.

Firstly, there was a wide range of topics, most of them appropriate to the Core. However, they varied in substance and depth of coverage. Some seemingly original, state-of-the-art and interesting topics were approached quite superficially and even in a cursory manner. In these, some unprocessed chunks lifted from the original sources did not always match the text type or the intended aim. Likewise, some less original topics were also approached with little explanation, assuming too much shared knowledge between the writer and the audience. As a consequence, relevant content was undeveloped and with serious gaps in development.

In either case, reading widely and critically about the chosen topic would have prompted higher quality of assignments. As stated in previous reports, at times assignments offered hardly any evidence that the sources were actually processed, or else they showed evidence that they were used without processing, lifting chunks from the original sources without considering their suitability for the chosen text type or aim.

One of the most frequently used text types was the essay, which usually requires a level of linguistic formality and methodical development that not all candidates managed to demonstrate. The second most frequently used text type was the diary entry. The problem here is that not all topics or aims lend themselves to be developed in the diary format and approach. In this sense, students need to give sufficient thought to planning the assignment, critically analysing all the elements that make up the task and ensuring they gel together in a unified and coherent whole.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: Rationale and Task

As regards performance, examiners pointed out that Criterion A and C were the weakest. However, there was an improvement concerning the rationale, which in general, included most of the 'musts'. It was extremely rare, though, to find a rationale which described the sources in detail, let alone how they were used in the task. In many cases, the reason why a script lost marks in Criterion A was that it was difficult to trace the sources in the task. Overall, the target audience was broadly identified.

Even if all the items were mostly present in the rationale, still the aim was not focused enough and how the aim was going to be achieved was not always described in detail with reference to the text type, audience, register and tone. As pointed out earlier, there needs to be a close connection between all these aspects added to the fact that the description of the sources also needs to point in the same direction. Kindly remember that the purpose of the rationale is to anticipate in a clear and concise manner what the assignment is about, which means that



everything anticipated in the rationale needs to be realized in the task. However, assignments on the whole did not demonstrate this.

### Criterion B: Organization and Development

It seemed there were more attempts at paragraphing this year than in previous years, even in the weaker tasks. It is still a regular feature, however, that ideas are mentioned but not fully expanded or illustrated. Although, connectors are usually used, ideas do not always lend themselves to be linked together the way they turn out to be. When transitional sentences are lacking, it would seem that there is a tendency to divert from the main points.

### Criterion C: Language

Language was rather weak, with serious flaws and gaps that many times obscured meaning. On several occasions, there were instances of L1 interference, and odd phrasing which seemed to indicate an excessive use of online translation tools. As well as this, as pointed out earlier, stretches of language taken verbatim from source texts without processing made assessing language quite complex at times. Run on sentences were once again a common feature as were errors in punctuation.

In many cases, the low mark in this criterion pulled the whole performance down. Much carelessness was evidenced, which could have been remedied by conscientious reviewing and editing by students.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are kindly requested to take note of the following:

- Ensure that students adhere to word limits for the written assignment: 150-200 words for the rationale and 250-400 words for the task.
- Require candidates to write the word count for the rationale and the task separately.
- Remind students that work falling significantly beneath the required word count is unlikely to meet the stated requirements of the task and is therefore likely to receive low marks while the assessment of tasks that exceed the word limit will be based on the first 400 words.
- Engage students in intertextual reading from different sources based on the Core topics.
- Make students fully aware with the requirements of the task and familiarize them with the assessment criteria. Discuss how their work must address the criteria effectively.
- Liaise with the students to select an appropriate topic, help them in the planning stage and monitor their work (without correcting).
- Advise candidates to write clear and focused aims that are feasible to be developed within the scope of the assignment.
- Have the candidates identify a text type that will aid them fulfilling their aim and define who the producer and the receiver of the message will be.
- Lead the candidates to select the tone and register that is effective for their purpose and audience.

- Draw the candidates' awareness to the fact that a description of sources requires clear identification of provenance, genre, a brief definition of the focus of the content and how this will be used to fulfil the aims of the assignment.
- Help students understand that organization and development of texts is about expanding ideas fully for their reader while linking one idea to the other to achieve a coherent whole.
- Challenge candidates to use accurate and appropriate language for the purpose of the assignment with a wide range of vocabulary used for effect, a variety of syntactic construction to render thought effectively and suitable rhetorical devices to enhance meaning.
- Assignments submitted must not have any sort of identification (candidate / school name or number).

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 9	10 - 18	19 - 27	28 - 35	36 - 43	44 - 51	52 - 60

### General comments

The IB assessment centre in Cardiff and the English B HL Paper 1 senior examiners wish to express their appreciation to the 47 teachers who completed the Teacher Comments on the Examination Paper (G2) form. The comments and opinions provided by teachers in this form are of great value to examiners and paper setters; they are taken into account when setting grade boundaries during grade award.

This session, teachers and examiners generally thought that the paper was of a similar standard to that of last November; only a few teachers thought it was either a little easier or a little more difficult. Most teachers also thought that the questions were at the appropriate difficulty level and that the choice of texts was suitable, interesting, and accessible to candidates. The presentation of the paper was deemed generally good to excellent.

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

One of the most challenging aspects for candidates this year seemed to have been providing an exact word or phrase for the answer. More often than not, candidates copied the sentence in which the answer appears from the text.

In addition, and similar to previous sessions, candidates seemed to find difficulty in tackling the true/false with justification questions. Most candidates were capable of determining whether a statement was true or false, but they either provided extraneous detail in their justifications or failed to provide essential parts of the answer. For example, a good number of candidates did not include 'focused', which is required to justify 'is basing', in their response to question 13.

The vocabulary exercise in Text B was not handled well by many candidates, especially questions 18 and 19.

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

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

Examiners noted 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. In addition, candidates generally understood references and the overall purpose of a text. They were also generally quite adept at handling the multiple choice questions and choosing the true statements.

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

Q1: Few candidates scored less than 2 out of 4. The options missed the most were, surprisingly, either D or G, both of which were quite clearly correct. J was a popular wrong choice, probably because candidates mistook '53 minutes' to mean 'at least an hour'.

Qs 2-6: This set proved to be of medium difficulty. A good number of candidates gave 'teenagers' as the answer to Q2, copied out whole sentences from the text instead of identifying the phrase required for Q3, gave 'brand awareness' as the answer for Q4, added 'usually' to the phrase required in Q5, and either missed 'brand' or provided 'thousands of students will be searching for places at higher education institutions' as the answer to Q6.

Q7: Generally answered correctly by most candidates. When answered wrong, D, instead of B, was given as the answer.

Qs 8-10: Another manageable set for candidates. However, some copied "Africa will be reduced to a dust bowl by global warming, with higher temperatures, reduced water supplies and population growth threatening to trigger worsening famines" as the answer for Q8. Many just wrote 'Soil, cropping systems, farming systems' for Q9, and a few gave 'Rattan Lal' as the answer for Q10.

Qs 11-15: A somewhat demanding set: Q12 was the easiest in the set, with only a few candidates ticking the wrong box or providing the wrong justification. Many lost the mark for Q11 because they ticked the wrong box or provided the whole sentence as the justification. As

for Q13, many lost the mark because they missed 'focused'. Q14 and Q15 were generally accessible to the average candidate.

Qs 16-19: most candidates failed to understand some of the words in context. The most difficult in the set were Q18 and Q19, for which candidates provided a number of responses other than the correct ones.

Qs 20-24: Those questions were generally easy and answered correctly by most candidates, except for Q22; a good number of candidates provided D instead of A as the correct answer.

Qs 25-28: The set was generally accessible. The most common errors were: 'Niki' or 'Niki's friend' (Q25), 'Niki's friend and her/the couple' (Q26), 'magazine' (Q27) and 'watching films' (Q28).

Qs 29-31: The set was generally handled well by average and good candidates. The most difficult in the set was Q30: several candidates provided either A or C instead of B.

Qs 32-36: Most candidates found this set difficult. A number of candidates got all 5 wrong. The most difficult in the set was Q36, for even candidates who answered Qs 32-35 correctly sometimes missed Q36 and gave G instead of I as the answer.

Qs 37-40: Most candidates managed to get at least 2 of those questions correct. Many gave 'selected' or 'bias' instead of 'slanted' for Q37, 'impression' instead of 'tendency' for Q39, and in some rare cases 'out of the ordinary' as the answer for Q40.

Qs 41 & 42: The set proved to be somewhat difficult for a good number of candidates. Some got both correct, while others only got one or none. The most common wrong answers were 'facts' (Q41) and 'focus on the facts' or 'be objective' (Q42).

Qs 43 & 44: a manageable pair that was answered correctly by most candidates.

Qs 45-49: Those were handled generally well by most candidates. The most accessible in the set was Q45 and the most demanding was Q49: many candidates provided 'MBA' or 'Masters in Business Administration' without 'interns'.

Qs 50-53: This proved to be a somewhat demanding set, especially Qs 52 and 53, as many students gave 'meanwhile' and 'whereas' as the answers for those questions.

Qs 54-56: Generally, an accessible set. Some candidates gave D and C as the answers to Qs 55 and 56 respectively.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are advised to:

- 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. Similarly, where “a phrase” or “a/one word” is required, only that phrase or word should be provided.

- warn students against offering multiple responses for short-answer questions; this does not demonstrate understanding of the question. Students **MUST** clearly cross out anything they do not wish to be marked.
- remind students that a tick is required in true/ false with justification questions, that all parts of the statement must be justified, and that the crucial words in the quotation used to justify a true or a false statement must not be omitted.
- advise students to write their answers in the provided answer boxes. If students do not want an answer to be marked, they should **clearly** cross it out, not put it between brackets. In addition, when an answer is written outside the provided box, the candidate **must** indicate where the answer appears (for example, ‘please see attached paper’ or ‘see below’). **It is worth noting here that a number of candidates used answer booklets to provide one answer, sometimes even a letter, which resulted in waste of paper and is not ecologically sound. Please advise candidates to avoid using answer booklets to provide single answers as much as possible.**
- answer questions using the exact wording of the text as much as possible, for all questions can be answered using the exact words in the text.
- **not** encourage candidates to provide ‘markscheme’ answers with parts of the answer appearing between parentheses. Equally, teachers should **not** encourage students to write out the full sentence then underline the relevant words. Examiners are instructed to mark the whole answer, including the additional part(s) or the part that is not underlined, and candidates are not given the benefit of the doubt when deploying those tricks.
- remind students to write their answer clearly in questions where a letter is required, for unclear answers will **NOT** be awarded the mark. Among ambiguous answers are C/G, E/F, E/L, I/J, and B/D.
- counsel students to pay extra attention to the legibility of their responses.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 16	17 - 22	23 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 45

### General comments

The International Baccalaureate assessment division would like to thank the teachers who have taken the time to complete the Teacher Comments on the Examination Paper (G2) Form. All

teachers are highly encouraged to submit their comments as they are usually invaluable to the process of grade awarding.

This session, 89% of respondents agreed that the paper was of an appropriate difficulty level while 11% of the teachers who had completed the form believed it to be too difficult.

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

As in previous sessions, candidates seemed to have difficulty in tackling the true/false with justification questions. A good number of candidates were capable of determining whether a statement was true or false but they either provided extraneous detail in their justifications or failed to provide integral parts of the answer. For example, some candidates added 'is already a huge concern' to the justification of Q22, which was not accepted because its addition changed the focus of the statement.

Some candidates found it hard to handle questions that required a phrase from the text. A good number of candidates either quoted the full sentence in which the answer appeared, or failed to determine the **exact** phrase that should be provided. For example, in Q11, the right phrase was "its fair share of dog-lovers", but a good number of candidates left "its" out.

The vocabulary exercise in Text B was not handled well by many candidates. It is very important that candidates develop understanding of the word in context.

Some references questions also proved to be quite challenging for a large number of candidates. In question 38, many of them lost the mark as they wrote '15% of those tested' but the word 'about' was missing. It is important to point out that candidates must look for the **direct** reference in the text.

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

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

The paper proved to be more challenging for the weak candidate. The average candidate was generally successful in locating, selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of question types in all texts. They were also quite adept at handling the multiple choice questions and choosing the true statements.

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

Q1: This question proved to be of medium difficulty. A good number of candidates scored 1 or 2 correct answers.

Q2: Quite accessible, although some candidates wrote a whole sentence instead of a phrase.

Q3: This question proved to be difficult.

Q4: Quite easy, and generally answered correctly by most candidates.

Q5: Quite demanding with many candidates giving “pooches” as an answer.

Q6: This question was not straightforward. Many candidates failed to answer it correctly. “Pet” and “pet-friendly” were often used as answers.

Q7: Quite demanding. When answered wrong, candidates gave B or C as answer.

Qs 8-11: This set proved to be of medium difficulty. In Q 11 many students left “its” out.

Qs 12-15: The set proved to be challenging for some candidates, with the exception of Q12.

Q16: Medium difficulty.

Q17: A good number of candidates failed to provide the right answers.

Q18: This proved to be one of the easiest questions in the paper.

Qs 19-21: This set proved to be quite challenging, with Q20 being the most difficult.

Qs 22-25: A very demanding set, with the exception of Q23 which was very accessible to a big number of students.

Qs 26-28: The set was generally handled well by most able candidates.

Q29: This question proved to be somewhat demanding. Many candidates provided D as the answer.

Qs 30-31: A good number of students got both answers right. Q31 was the easier of the two.

Qs 32-34: Medium difficulty. Q33 was more accessible.

Qs 35-38: This set was of medium difficulty. Q37 proved to be accessible to a large number of candidates.

Qs 39-41: The set was generally handled well by able candidates.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are advised to:

- familiarise candidates with the common types of questions and with appropriate strategies to answer each of them.
- encourage students to answer questions using the exact wording of the texts as much as possible. All questions can be answered using the exact words in the text, with very little or - more often - no transformation.

- make students practise how to frame words or phrases. Where “one” detail is required, a candidate who gives more than one runs the risk of losing the mark. If one answer is correct and another answer is incorrect, no mark will be awarded. Where “one phrase” is required, candidates must write **a phrase**, in most cases a short one.
- counsel candidates to write their answers inside the boxes provided. When an answer is written outside the box, the candidate must indicate where the answer appears, for example, “please see attached paper”. If the student clearly crosses out the answer inside the box and writes the correct one next to the box, there is **no** need to use a whole booklet just to clarify that a letter has been corrected.
- remind candidates that a tick is required in true/false with justification questions, that **all** parts of the statement must be justified, and that the crucial words in the quotation used to justify a true or a false statement must not be omitted. The use of dots (...) in the justifications must not be included as the quotations required are mostly brief.
- warn candidates against offering multiple responses for short-answer questions; this does not demonstrate understanding of the question. Candidates **must** clearly cross out anything they do not wish to be marked.
- encourage candidates to write neatly and legible.
- encourage candidates to answer every question. Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers, so no answer should be left blank.

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

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

### General comments

In general, the majority of candidates demonstrated that they could express themselves fairly clearly (despite slips and flaws in language command), and were capable of dealing with the requirements of the questions in a reasonably methodical manner.

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

**Proposal and interview:** These two text types (Q3 and Q4, respectively) were sometimes not handled well. The main weakness of many proposal responses was a lack of formal structuring – the use of main headings, sub-headings, bullet points, *etc.*, to give a clear visual structure to the argument of the proposal. Indeed, many such scripts did not have a particularly clear overall argument, and so were not particularly convincing. In relation to the interview text type, a small but significant minority of candidates wrote ‘transcribed’ interviews, despite the clear instruction



in the question not to. This raised the suspicion that such candidates had simply not been taught about 'embedded' and 'transcribed' interviews.

**Recurrent language errors:** As in previous sessions, some candidates displayed persistent errors in grammar, phrasing and usage, often in recognisable forms consistent with L1 interference. Typically, these involved poor agreement in the use of pronouns, weak control of tense structures, and inaccurate prepositions. Many of these errors also seemed linked to oral production of the language eg 'wanna' for 'want to'.

**Development of ideas:** A large minority of candidates did not develop their ideas and arguments sufficiently. Content was usually relevant enough to the task (see *Coverage of task*, below), but the meaning and implications of support material were often not explained clearly or coherently. To illustrate, in Q1, suitable anecdotes about disabled people were provided, but often the relevance of such anecdotes was not explained explicitly, nor were general conclusions drawn from what the anecdotes indicated. This tendency particularly applied in Section A; in Section B, ideas were often developed in some detail, but were not organised particularly methodically, seeming to have been thought out on the spur of the moment without pre-planning.

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

**Overall command of language:** The majority of candidates displayed sufficient language resources to be able to communicate reasonably clearly. In most scripts, it was usually possible to find some evidence of competent basic sentence structure, of common cohesive devices and sequence markers to link ideas together, and of some examples of a range of vocabulary and/or authentic phrasing.

**Coverage of task:** The majority of this session's candidates covered basic elements of the tasks slightly more methodically than candidates in previous sessions: specifically, under Criterion B and Criterion C:

- Criterion B – most scripts showed at least adequate coverage of the task: *ie* they carried out the 'action verbs' (eg Q2: 'record' and 'reflect'). Few ignored one of these required elements, or treated it cursorily.
- Criterion C – a large majority of the scripts covered all of the required conventions: *ie* they scored 5 marks.

It may be that many teachers are now thoroughly aware of what is required in Section A, and have instructed their students accordingly.

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

The Q1 e-mail task was definitely the most popular choice, probably because the e-mail was seen as an accessible text type, often by weaker candidates. The diary task (Q2) and the

presentation (Q5) were equally popular, each being selected by around 20% of the candidates, possibly because the diary is seen as another informal text type, like the e-mail; and the presentation was seen as a 'speech' or 'talk' which, it seems, are much practised in schools. The other two, the proposal (Q3) and the interview (Q4) were probably less popular because they may have been seen as 'complicated' text types. This analysis sets aside the possible influence of subject matter – but all of the topics in the questions appear to be quite easily accessible to candidates, who are likely to have at least *some* experience or knowledge about them.

## Section A

### Question 1: Cultural diversity – E-mail

Most scripts provided competent explanations of what was observed, and some comment explaining why the writer was impressed. The question mentioned "ways", and most candidates correctly supplied more than one example or observation or anecdote. The most usual weaknesses were that candidates got stuck on explaining one experience in great detail, leaving little space for other examples or for comment. A few candidates veered off the main topic and devoted most of their response to explaining how badly their own country dealt with people with disabilities, in contrast to the 'English-speaking country'- which was not completely irrelevant, but certainly peripheral to the actual task. One or two candidates seemed to be simply unsure what 'disabilities' meant; they presumably chose this question because it was an e-mail, even if they didn't know what the subject was supposed to be. This, of course, is a bad idea.

### Question 2: Customs and traditions – Diary

Most scripts provided little information about the conference (indeed, some candidates seemed unclear about what 'conference' might mean). This lack was not terribly serious, since the main point of the question was to discuss the 'ideas presented'. Only a minority of scripts provided any clear ideas about the 'difficulties' mentioned in the question, and there tended to be a lack of concrete and specific supporting evidence and detail. However, most managed to reflect on the significance of maintaining traditions, developing ideas to some extent in fairly generalised terms. The handling of the diary text type was generally competent: there was much personal commentary, thinking ideas through, in a fairly informal and appropriate register, and without too much false background detail.

### Question 3: Health – Proposal

This text type was set last year, and as the November 2016 Subject Report noted, "Scripts tended to be poorly focused in terms of address to a specific audience, and in terms of structure". Handling of the text type has proved to be somewhat better this year: a few more scripts were clearly addressed to 'the principal', and more showed structural features such as sub-headings, bullet points, etc. However, the majority of scripts still failed to (a) provide a clear and concise explanation of what is being proposed (*ie* effective summary); and (b) target arguments persuasively towards the expected audience (*ie* skilful argument). Devising both a healthy exercise campaign and how 'a principal' might react demands some imagination, of

course, but in general candidates appeared familiar with both elements – it was more that the approach did not seem to have been thought out fully in planning.

#### **Question 4: Leisure – Interview**

Most candidates correctly wrote an article describing the interview and explaining the author's ideas, with quotations 'embedded' in the text. However, a small minority did not follow the clear instruction in the question, and wrote the 'transcribed' text of the interview, which lost significant marks under Criterion C. The question required attention to 'motivation' and 'appeal to teenagers': most candidates covered these two areas competently, although often without much depth or detail, and occasionally with confused ideas about what the terms mean. In general, however, most candidates produced a reasonably competent handling of this text type, combining description, summary of ideas, and quotations in fairly coherent ways.

#### **Question 5: Science and technology – Presentation**

Few scripts made an accurate distinction between (pure) 'science' and (applied) 'technology', but the Marking Notes accepted 'advances in technology' as well as the question's wording of "advances in science". A significant minority of scripts failed to focus as instructed on "one such...advance", but rather discussed advances in science/technology in general, or referred to various different advances. However, most scripts dealt competently with the notion of benefits and damage, with reasonably effective explanation of the consequences of the chosen advance(s). In addition to a certain failure to focus the response clearly as required by the question, there was a tendency to forget that this was supposed to be a 'presentation'; many scripts had little sense of address to the audience, and little use of rhetorical effects, thus they tended to read as essays.

Overall, then, this task was accessible to the candidates in terms of subject matter, but many candidates lost marks through failing to focus accurately and precisely on the clear requirements of the question.

### **Section B**

The stimulus seems to have been highly accessible to the candidates; unsurprisingly, since all of them have many years' experience of teaching and learning. Almost all scripts, accordingly, had a reasonably clear overall point of view, often supported with some concrete evidence or anecdotes of experience. Thus, almost all responses were relevant to the stimulus, and contained at least some indication of sensible comments. In addition, there were few scripts where 'establishing the text type' wasted words, and reduced coverage of the main task.

However, few responses showed evidence of (a) real 'clarification' of key terms; or (b) active critical thinking. There was some clarification, at least implicitly, of what is meant by 'learning' (a vast majority of candidates argued that learning is the student's responsibility, and demands interest and commitment); but there was little clarification of what might be involved in teaching. In addition, there seems to have been relatively little critical questioning of *what* one should learn, or *why*, or of the relationship between teaching and learning – these features of really developed argument only occurred in a limited number of the best scripts.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

**Correction of language errors:** As noted under *Recurrent language errors* (“Areas candidates found difficult” section, above), many scripts at the lower end of the performance range presented regular and consistent flaws in basic grammar: eg use of pronouns, handling of tenses, *etc.* Such scripts were often long, even rambling, suggesting that students could write extensively, but not correctly. Teachers should (i) advise students to write less, more accurately; and (ii) provide detailed corrections to work written during the course, targeted so as to eliminate each student’s most common typical mistakes.

**Methodical explanation of ideas:** As noted under *Development of ideas* (also above), many scripts displayed content which was relevant, but under-developed. Such scripts either failed to explain ideas fully, leaving relevance merely suggested; or failed to explore the consequences and implications of ideas through a process of critical thinking. Both in class discussions and in course written work, teachers should make an effort to require students to explain exactly what they mean, and to question their own statements critically.

**The teaching of linkers, sequence markers, etc:** The methodical exploration of ideas may be supported if teachers make a specific point of teaching sequence markers (in order to structure explanations more clearly), and qualifiers such ‘more important’, ‘the most striking’, *etc.*, which should encourage students to evaluate and self-assess their ideas.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

## General comments

A small number of teachers completed the Teacher’s Comments on the Examination Paper (G2) form this session; the International Baccalaureate would like to thank them for their feedback and encourage all teachers to submit their comments in future sessions.

Overall, the paper is considered of a similar difficulty level to that of November 2016. Clarity of wording and the presentation of the paper were considered very good to excellent.

Overall, questions seemed accessible in a way that most candidates were able to relate to the topics presented. There were some intelligent responses that presented ideas in a coherent and developed manner with few significant errors. However, there was a good number of candidates whose errors in basic structures obscured meaning or who failed to understand what the question required.

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

**Language:** As always, some answers were impressive in their use of language; better able students were able to produce complex structures clearly and use a wide range of vocabulary both accurately and effectively. However, there was a good number of candidates who demonstrated limited to adequate command of language with very basic errors made in verb forms, tenses, subject-verb agreement and punctuation. Examiners mentioned many errors resulting from L1 interference which obscured meaning. There needs to be more attention to very basic grammatical forms in such cases.

**The 'report' text type:** In the majority of Q5 scripts marked, the report was produced ineffectively: text type read more of a reflective blog or an informal diary entry with so much personalization and many embellishments.

**Development of ideas and parameters of the question:** In many cases, good responses were produced with coherent and relevant ideas expressed clearly, but they lacked the lucid explanations and supporting details to award the top of the range marks. Those particularly were observed in Qs 2, 4 and 5. In other cases, many candidates failed to meet the focused parameters of Qs 4 and 5 (please see below) which resulted in marking scripts down on message.

**Paragraphing:** As in previous sessions, many candidates did not divide their answers into paragraphs. Some questions (like Q1) required a sequence of ideas leading to a coherent and convincing argument. However, many scripts, including the high-quality ones, presented different interesting sub-ideas at times without clearly linking them to what came before and after. Poorly or non-paragraphed responses did not score high marks in Criterion B in all questions.

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

Examiners observed that candidates seemed well-prepared for Criterion C. Most of the candidates produced effective conventions of the text types required, except for Q5 "the report". Many of the text types were authentic with basic elements of register and style deployed successfully even when candidates failed to address the message of the task as precisely as needed.

In many cases, it was noticed that candidates effectively used personal experience, especially in Qs 4 and 5, to support their argument. There was also an attempt to justify points raised using real or fictitious examples which when clearly linked in context, resulted in a coherent and methodically developed response.

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

All questions were attempted by candidates with Qs 4 and 5 being the most popular by far, while Q3 proved to be the least attempted.

### **Question 1: Cultural diversity – Essay**

This question proved to be the third most popular one. Few scripts demonstrated understanding of the question with supporting ideas and lucid or effective examples. The majority of scripts (i) lacked coherence and read confusingly, (ii) digressed into cultural diversity at large (among other topics) and/or (iii) were totally irrelevant with no reference to national borders, except in the title.

The majority of candidates produced the essay conventions fairly well. In some cases, however, no title was provided and stylistic features proved ineffective.

### **Question 2: Customs and traditions – Letter to the Editor**

Despite the formal conventions required, this question also proved to be generally popular. However, very few scripts managed to demonstrate evidence to award high marks on Criterion B. A small number of candidates cleverly thought of a specific custom, provided clear and lucid reasons why they disapprove of it and gave alternative customs. However, the majority either (i) failed to address the alternative custom, (ii) covered the alternative custom with confusion or superficiality and/or (iii) misunderstood the word 'custom' and ended up talking about irrelevant topics or rambling about customs and traditions generally.

Conventions of the letter to the editor were generally evident. The weakest part was either maintaining an engaging style or using the appropriate register.

### **Question 3: Health – Leaflet**

This question was the least popular by far. When attempted, candidates produced an authentic leaflet with both dangerous effects of the disease and protection being addressed either competently or with some details. As in previous sessions, the leaflet seems to be an undesirable text type despite the accessible topic this session.

### **Question 4: Leisure – Talk**

This proved to be one of the most popular questions due to its accessible text type and the topic that all candidates felt comfortable talking about: their hobbies. However, this did not necessarily result in candidates being awarded high marks due to the second part of the question 'encouragement' being superficially covered in many cases or the candidate presenting very general benefits of the hobby that were ineffectively developed or unclearly linked to personal development. In many cases, paragraphing, cohesive devices, lack of examples and the amount of factual information about the hobby itself contributed to preventing top of the range marks.

The better able candidates attempting this question were able to describe the hobby (real or invented), explain with lucid and effective details how it contributed to personal development and either implicitly or explicitly encouraged audience to take up the hobby using a passionate tone.

Good responses maintained contact with audience and used effective talk/speech rhetoric. However, there seemed a good number of responses that failed to attract audience's attention in the beginning and leave a strong impression in the end.

### **Question 5: Science and technology – Report**

Despite candidates' failure to produce an effective report (except for very few), this question proved popular due to its engaging topic. Most of the responses handled the impact of lack of technology on daily life with some details, but mainly through listing what they did each day without any evidence of effective development or supporting details. Many candidates either failed to address the second part 'what has been learned' or covered it superficially, which resulted in lower marks for Criterion B.

Report conventions were ineffective at large: Register seemed chatty/informal at times with lots of embellishments that affected the style. Many reports read like personal blogs or informal letters. Very few had a clearly structured layout. As in previous sessions, it seems this text type is not properly addressed by teachers, but it was opted for because candidates found adequate ideas to talk about what lack of technology might result in. Teachers are highly advised to practise such text types among others as stipulated in the Language B Guide.

## **Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

Candidates are advised to:

- carefully read all parts of the question and underline the essential key words. When two aspects/things are mentioned in the question, **BOTH** have to be addressed; otherwise, message will be deemed "partially communicated".
- maintain a legible handwriting. This needs practice well before the examination, and candidates need to maintain the habit of proof-reading their final drafts.
- use correct paragraphing and effective cohesive devices, something examiners always check on, and teachers are always advised to stress that in class.

Teachers are advised to:

- frequently address significant grammar errors.
- practise with candidates how to develop ideas coherently and effectively.
- practise with students ALL text types mentioned in the Language B Guide.