



*Let the mind manage the body
Que l'esprit gère le corps*

**MAURITIUS
EXAMINATIONS
SYNDICATE**

**NCE 2020-2021
GRADE 9
English**

Subject code: N500

EXAMINERS' REPORT

April 2022

Key Messages

- Most candidates have achieved the required levels when it comes to basic vocabulary, basic grammar, basic reading and basic writing.
- Candidates are advised to read widely to build up their vocabulary in English.
- In Grammar, candidates are still having difficulty with the following:
 - Use of the do-support (**Jamie did not spoke to anyone...*)
 - Subject-verb agreement (** Each one of us have homework to do.*)
 - The past tense of irregular verbs (*fly/flew*)
 - Transforming declarative sentences into interrogatives and negatives properly.
 - Using sentences in the active/passive voice
- In Reading Comprehension,
 - candidates fare better on questions requiring literal understanding.
 - questions assessing higher-order reading skills like making inferences, offering personal responses and guessing the meaning of words in context were found challenging by many.
- In Writing,
 - candidates should pay closer attention to their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
 - weaker candidates have serious difficulties with sentence separation.
 - narrative essays require candidates to develop a storyline and use varied sentence structures and a wide-ranging vocabulary to sustain the reader's interest.
 - descriptive essays require candidates to show a very wide range of vocabulary to create an atmosphere. Far too often narrative essays were produced instead of descriptive ones.
 - argumentative essays require relevant information to be organised coherently and ideas need to flow logically. Some candidates simply listed ideas one after the other.
- For the literature component,
 - Candidates generally fared well when identifying literary devices.
 - Questions requiring analysis, with relevant reference from the given poem, proved to be challenging to most.

General Comments

The NCE Assessment in English is based on learning outcomes spelt out in the National Curriculum Framework and on the Teaching and Learning syllabus for English produced by the MIE. The tasks set assess reading comprehension, writing skills, grammar and use of English, and literary appreciation.

On the whole, performance in the first ever session on the NCE English assessment was encouraging. The strongest candidates showed a very high level of mastery of English, with very accurate use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. They produced excellent pieces of writing and were able to deal with the higher order reading comprehension questions well.

For an important number of candidates, however, showing understanding of and using less common vocabulary remains a challenge. This was particularly visible in the vocabulary question of the extended reading task (Question 8, Item 14), where the performance of candidates was disappointing.

As far as writing is concerned, on the whole, candidates wrote narrative essays better than they did argumentative or descriptive essays. Descriptive essays often quickly turned into narratives and many candidates often did not have the range and depth of vocabulary to offer high quality descriptions. Argumentative essays were also generally challenging to candidates, with many struggling to organise their ideas into a coherent argument and only listing ideas one after the other.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 – Basic Grammar

Question 1 tests a range of basic grammatical items. It uses multiple-choice items and open-ended questions to assess candidates' ability to deal with basic but essential grammatical items at this level. In this assessment session, the following grammatical points were assessed: Pronouns (personal, reflexive and wh-pronouns), the use of tenses (simple present and simple past), correct verb forms, subject-verb agreement, coherence of tenses, punctuation, re-writing a sentence in the plural, transforming sentences in the interrogative form, linking sentences using coordinating conjunctions and transforming sentences from the active to the passive voice.

The best-done items were those dealing with personal and reflexive pronouns (Items 1 and 2), the wh-pronoun (Item 4) and the use of the simple future tense (Item 6). Candidates had greater difficulty with items testing the correct form of the verb in a structure involving the do-support (Item 5), subject-verb agreement (Item 7), re-writing a sentence in the plural (Item 10) and transforming a declarative sentence in the interrogative form (Item 11).

Examiners would like to draw the attention of candidates to the importance of indicating their answers clearly when making corrections to their answers in the MCQs. Very often, when crossing out an answer and choosing another one, they do not indicate their answer clearly enough. Candidates are therefore encouraged to write out their answers clearly in the space available to them if this happens.

Item 1 This item tested the use of the reflexive pronoun *ourselves* and was well attempted.

Item 2 This item tested the use of the personal pronoun. Candidates were expected to know that the pronoun that matched *grandmother* was *her*. This basic grammatical concept in English was very well attempted by most candidates.

Item 3 This item tested knowledge of the *neither...nor* structure in English and was successfully attempted by most candidates.

Item 4 This item tested the use of the relative pronoun *which*. In particular, it aimed at assessing whether candidates knew that *who* and *whom* refer to people and *which* refers to things. It was very well done on the whole.

Item 5 This item tested whether candidates could choose the correct verb form in a structure containing the auxiliary *do*. Many candidates failed to give the correct answer here. A common wrong answer was *spoke* instead of *speak*. As was seen elsewhere in the paper as well, many candidates have difficulty finding correct verb forms in sentences where auxiliaries and modal verbs are used. They do not realise that in such sentences the tense will be carried by the auxiliary or the modal verb.

Item 6 This item tested the use of the simple future tense and did not pose any difficulty to most candidates.

Item 7 Item 7 assessed subject-verb agreement. This item was found challenging by many. An important number of candidates chose Option A (**Each one of us have homework to do*). They may have thought that the verb agreed with *us* rather than with the singular *Each one*.

Item 8 This item assessed the coherence of tenses within a sentence. Candidates had to show understanding of the fact that since the first verb was in the past tense, the following verb would have to be in the past tense too in this context. Most candidates attempted this item correctly.

Item 9 This item tested whether candidates knew when capital letters would be required in the given sentence. Most candidates could identify that the opening word *The* should start with a capital letter, along with the proper noun *Rodrigues*. Some candidates wrongly thought that *o'clock* also needed a capital letter.

Item 10 This item asked candidates to transform the given sentence into the plural. The word *knife* had to be transformed into *knives* and consequently, the verb *is* needed to be transformed to *are*. The question was generally well-attempted. Some candidates lost marks by giving **knifes* as the plural of *knife*. Others lost marks by making unnecessary and often wrong transformations (e.g. transforming *the* into *these* and *old* into *older*).

Item 11 This item required candidates to transform a declarative sentence into its interrogative form. Many candidates failed to do so properly and did not seem to know that when a sentence already has an auxiliary verb, it is that auxiliary verb that has to come before the subject for a question to be formed. It is only when there is no other auxiliary verb that *do*, *does* or *did* is used to form a question. Therefore, answers like *Did she leave for school?* were wrong. Others lost marks by making grammatical mistakes when making the transformation, in particular by not giving the correct verb form, or omitting the question mark, as seen below.

**Has she leave/d for school?*

**Has she left for school.*

**Does she left for school?*

Item 12. This item assessed candidates' ability to separate sentences. This remains a very basic task and most candidates managed to do it correctly. However, separating sentences remains a challenge for weaker candidates who often use a comma instead of a full stop to separate independent clauses, like in **Lennie went behind the tree, He was playing hide and seek.*

Item 13 In item 13, candidates had to punctuate the given sentence. Three changes had to be made: Did Neha have her mobile phone with her?

While most candidates recognised that capital letters were required for the opening word and the proper noun, some lost marks by omitting the final question mark or by using wrong punctuation signs, like in **Did Neha have her mobile phone with her!* Or *“Did Neha have her mobile phone with her?”*

Item 14 This item assessed candidates' ability to link two sentences using a coordinating conjunction and was successfully attempted on the whole. Some candidates lost marks by coordinating the sentence in such a way that it did not make sense, as in **Elizabeth was far away although she could see Darcy watching her.*

Item 15 Item 15 tested candidates' ability to transform a sentence from the active to the passive voice. To be able to do so, candidates had to use the correct syntax, grammar and agent. The expected answer was *A bag was left by Riva.*

Common wrong answers included **Riva bag has been left* (wrong syntax); **A bag was left* (absence of agent); and **the bag is left by Riva, *the bag has been left by Riva, *a bag was lefted by Riva* (grammatical mistakes).

Question 2 – Basic Vocabulary

This question assesses knowledge of basic vocabulary items at this level. On the whole, this question was very well done, suggesting that knowledge of basic vocabulary items has been acquired by most.

The best-done items were:

Item 1 *She is very honest. She never lies nor cheats.*

Item 2 *Have you told him about the outing?*

Item 4 *Can you please tell us what's on the menu for dinner tonight?*

The following items proved to be problematic to some candidates.

Item 3 *The horses are resting in their stable.*

Some candidates wrongly answered *kennel*, possibly due to a familiarity with the word.

Item 5 *Jane is the most popular girl in the school. We all like her.*

The word *surprising* was a strong distractor here.

Question 3 – Basic Reading Comprehension

Question 3 assessed reading comprehension at a basic level, in particular the ability to locate information. An information sheet on a vacancy at “Victoria School” was set and on the whole, candidates fared very well, with most candidates showing that the basic reading skill of literal understanding had been acquired.

It has to be noted that little credit could be given to those who resorted to indiscriminate lifting. In this kind of task, the importance of brief and accurate answers is essential. Most items were generally well answered by candidates. However, item 4 posed difficulty to many candidates, who seemed to have difficulty with the term ‘minimum age’. The correct answer was *30 years* but many candidates lost marks by indiscriminately lifting ** be between 30 to 45 years of age*.

Question 4 – Word Formation

This question assessed word formation in context. A short passage about coconuts was set, with the words needing transformation given in brackets. This question was successfully answered by the majority of candidates, which suggests that the common word formation rules have been acquired generally.

Item 1 *They are one of the most important crops of the tropics.*

This item tested the transformation of the singular noun *crop* into the plural *crops*. Candidates were expected to show knowledge of the fact that the noun in the structure *one of the...* will be in the plural. Most candidates managed to do so.

Item 2 *The liquid found in the coconut is usually consumed as a drink.*

For item 2, candidates were required to transform the adjective *usual* into the adverb *usually*. This is a common transformation in English and did not pose difficulty to the majority of candidates.

Item 3 *Oil extracted from the dried kernel produces very healthy vegetable oil.*

The transformation of the noun *health* to the adjective *healthy* was expected here. This item did not pose difficulty to the majority of candidates.

Item 4 *Coconut flesh can be eaten dried or fresh.*

In this item, the infinite form of the verb *eat* had to be transformed into the past participle form *eaten*. A noticeable number of candidates failed to do so, struggling to give the correct verb form and offering answers like **ate* or **eated*.

Item 5 *Coconut milk is used in cooking / cookery or as a substitute for cow’s milk.*

The transformation of the verb *cook* into *cooking* or the noun *cookery* was expected here. Most candidates managed to do this correctly.

Question 5 – Error Hunt

Question 5 is the error hunt task and assessed candidates' ability to deal with grammar and spelling in context. A short text containing grammatical and spelling mistakes was set. The mistakes were already identified (through underlining) and candidates were required to correct them. This question was generally well answered, with the exception of items 2 and 5.

Item 1 ...*dad didn't wanted to...*

This item assessed whether candidates would be able to give the correct verb form, *want*, in a structure with the do-support. Most candidates managed to do so.

Item 2 ...*a bag containing some snacks she has packed...*

This item tested whether candidates would be able to identify that the past perfect tense, *had packed* was required here and not the present perfect. A common wrong answer was the simple past tense, **packed*.

Item 3 ...*I saw a bird looked at me...*

Two answers were possible here – either the present participle form of the verb, *looking* or the infinitive form, *look*. Candidates did well on this item generally.

Item 4 ...*I was impress when the bird caught it in mid-air...*

The past participle form of the verb to impress, *impressed*, was required for item 4 and it was well attempted on the whole.

Item 5 ...*the bird flied in the car...*

This item required candidates to give the correct form of the irregular verb to fly in the simple past tense, *flew*. This was the most problematic item in this question.

Question 6 – Cloze Text

Question 6 is the open Cloze text - a higher order reading task which assesses candidates' overall knowledge of language (grammar, syntax and vocabulary). It requires candidates to use the given context and draw on their linguistic knowledge to make educated guesses of what word might be suitable in the given gaps.

Many candidates found this task challenging. Items 1, 2 and 3, in particular, were found difficult by candidates, with only about half of the cohort managing to find a suitable word for these gaps.

Item 1 *Riding a bicycle costs little compared to /with driving a car*

A preposition was required in this gap. An important number of candidates had difficulty offering an acceptable answer.

Item 2 *Cycling does not cause / generate air pollution...*

Candidates had to offer a verb here and a number of options were possible. Many candidates lost marks by making grammatical mistakes.

Item 3 *Cycling is silent and helps to reduce traffic noise...*

A number of options were accepted provided they conveyed the idea of reducing traffic noise. This was another item where an important number of candidates had difficulty offering a plausible option.

Item 4 *In addition, cycling helps people to save time / fuel/ money...*

A wide range of answers were acceptable here and this item was generally well done

Item 5 people are less likely to fall sick.

Generally well answered gap. *Become/ feel/ be/ get* were also accepted answers and the majority of candidates was able to find a plausible word.

Question 7 – Functional Writing

Question 7 is the basic writing task, with candidates required to write a short text of 50 -75 words on a functional task. They are essentially assessed on their ability to write using accurate G/S/P and showing good awareness of the audience and purpose. Given the word limit, candidates were not expected to elaborate on the given points but simply to address them clearly.

In this session, candidates were asked to write about an important event that their school had organised. They had to write a short note to their aunt to tell her about the event. The purpose and situation proved to be very straightforward for the majority of candidates. A successful answer had to address the following prompts:

- Which event did your school organise?
- When did it take place?
- Which activities were organised?
- What did your friends and teachers do?
- How was the event important for you and your school?

For bullet point 1, it was necessary to mention a specific event organised by the school. This was achieved by most candidates. They mentioned a specific event such as Prize Giving ceremony, Sports Day, Food and Fun day among others.

For bullet point 2, candidates were asked for a specific date when the event took place. In fact many gave a specific date, and many referred to ‘last Tuesday’/‘last week’/‘yesterday’/‘at the end of the first term’ or something similar which were all credited. A small number of candidates mistook the event for one in the future and a small number also thought they had to invite their aunt for the event, which betrayed a lack of awareness of the purpose of the task.

For bullet point 3, candidates had to include different activities organised on that day. To a large extent, candidates came up with a wide list of activities. Details of what happened were usually conveyed in an enthusiastic and convincing manner.

For bullet point 4, candidates were required to write about how their friends **and** teachers were involved in the activities. The most successful candidates saw the opportunity to write about these separately.

Bullet 5, required the candidates to be specific about the importance of the event for themselves **and** for the school. The weakest responses neglected to mention the importance of one or the other.

Successful candidates addressed all prompts given. Excellent responses showed clear awareness of audience and purpose. They used very accurate grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax. Vocabulary was appropriate and accurate. The overall task was organised and coherent.

Less successful candidates demonstrated no real sense of audience and purpose. They did not cover most of the prompts or at best only addressed them superficially. They demonstrated poor linguistic abilities resulting in limited understanding. Those candidates also used simple and inaccurate vocabulary leading to disjointed writing.

The following samples illustrate the range of answers obtained this year. They are provided to give educators an idea of standards and of examiners' expectations.

Example 1

1/April/2021

DEAR Aunt,

I hope you are doing great. I have some stories to tell you. Recently my school organised a prize giving ceremony. It was during the last day of second term. We organised some activities like: karaoke and dance show. It was fun. My friends helped the teachers to decorate the school hall. The event was important as our guest of honor was the prime minister.

Regards,
Your niece.

This response scores very highly as it addresses all the bullet points, uses accurate G/S/P and shows clear awareness of audience and purpose. The minor spelling mistakes do not impact in the overall readability of the writing. It is noteworthy that such simple, straightforward responses can score very high marks.

Example 2

Dear aunt,

I am writing this letter to you, to inform you about a special day that took place yesterday. My school organised a fun day and I had an amazing experience there. My friends and I participated in most of the activities organised. Some of the activities were football matches, gaming tournaments and an eating contest. The teachers were the ones supervising and controlling the participants in the activities. This was probably the best event I have attended at my school.

This response showed clear awareness of audience and purpose. However, the response failed to address the final point adequately, which meant that this script could not be in the top band.

Example 3

Aunt it is me your adorable niece, I wanted to ~~invited~~ tell you a important event which the school itself had organised. ~~The~~ My school has organised a Family day, which everyone family has ~~can~~ enjoy together. It had been held on the 24th June 2021 near the gymnasium. The activities which ~~are~~ were organised : was haunted house, Face painting, Selfie with costumes, and a cinema hall. My Friends ~~are~~ has preparing snacks and beverages for selling and teachers were greeting parents at the door and giving them a card, The event was important for me and my school because we ~~are keeping~~ had kept this money For ~~a~~ the charity persons.

This is an average response. Although the key points are addressed, the English is far too insecure for this candidate to score highly. There are many grammatical and spelling issues which at times even threaten to make the meaning unclear.

Example 4

One day My School organised a music day and invite old people on school, me and My Friend decide to up the Frag Of school the journey its very Funny the ~~child~~ children are excited to participate on the music game them they transport our ~~is~~ instrument to participate and play themselves.

This is a very poor response. The given points are not properly addressed and the language used is insecure throughout

Question 8 – Extended Reading Comprehension

The extended reading comprehension task assesses comprehension skills in a more varied way and at different levels than the basic reading. This year, the text was an adapted narrative passage from *Lion* by Saroo Brierley.

Candidates generally performed well on questions testing literal understanding. However, questions requiring the ability to make inferences and read between the lines proved to be problematic for some candidates.

It was also noteworthy that questions requiring knowledge of vocabulary in context proved to be very challenging to even the better candidates.

Candidates are reminded of the following:

- Lifting is acceptable if the question does not ask candidates to answer in their own words, but must not contain excess information.
- Excess information in an otherwise correct answer is not given credit.
- Grammatical and spelling mistakes are not penalised if evidence of understanding is clearly shown.

The following items are worthy of comment:

Item 3

Saroo “looked up” to his brother (line 4). What does this show about how he felt about Guddu?

Expected answer: *He was proud of / had a high opinion of / admired/ respected his brother.*

However, many candidates did not understand the meaning of the expression *looked up* and merely made reference to the brother’s height. The key idea of admiration was missing in many responses.

Item 5

Explain fully why Saroo was feeling guilty

Many candidates had difficulty following the two key ideas of having a responsibility and not being able to fulfill it.

Candidates were penalised for mentioning only one key idea. They disregarded the instructions of explaining “fully”.

Item 6

Saroo was feeling “exhausted” (line 15) and asked his brother to let him rest. What other piece of evidence in this paragraph shows that Saroo was very tired?

The expected answer to this item was : *He slumped into a bench / he fell asleep straightaway.* The lift “ *I lay down, shut my eyes and must have fallen asleep straightaway*” was also given credit.

A large number of candidates resorted to lifting the word exhausted from the question and did not lay emphasis on the word straightaway.

Item 8

What was the first thing Saroo did when he woke up?

This item demanded for the very first action to be identified.

The expected answer was: *Saroo looked around for his brother / for Guddu.*

Excess information was given by a large number of candidates e.g Still sleepy, I looked around for Guddu but couldn't see him anywhere. Indiscriminate lifting containing excess information cannot be given credit.

Item 9

"My thoughts were muddled..." (line 22) Give one piece of evidence that shows that Saroo was confused at this point.

The expected answer was:

- He had many thoughts crossing his mind.
- He didn't know if he was seeing the same train.
- He couldn't figure out how long he had been asleep

The lift : *What if I fell asleep on the dark platform again and the train pulled out and I was left alone?* was also given credit.

An important number of candidates failed to identify the above key ideas.

Item 11

Why did Saroo prefer the "empty wooden bench seats" (line 27) on the train to the bench on the train station? Give two reasons.

Two elements of answer were expected here:

- They were more comfortable.
- They felt safer.

If more than two answers were given, the first two ideas were marked.

The comparison was an essential element to secure marks. Candidates failing to show any comparison, e.g *They were comfortable. They were safe*, were not awarded any marks.

Item 13

"I screamed, banged the windows, cried, cursed." (lines 32 – 33) What does this sentence show about Saroo's feelings at this point?

Expected answer:

- He was desperate/ helpless
- He was panic-stricken/ distressed/ very upset/ anguished/ extremely/very worried

In this question, candidates were asked to recognise and comment on the feelings of Saroo at this point.

Weaker candidates only identified and explained the literal meaning of the given sentence. The intensity of the emotions was missed by some candidates leading to a loss of marks.

Item 14

In this vocabulary question, candidates were required to explain the meaning of the given words in the given context.

Credit was not given wherever two contradictory answers were written. Spelling mistakes and different figures of speech were not penalised.

Popular answers are as follows:

Hanging out: Spending time with

Thrilled: Excited was the correct synonym for *thrilled*. *Happy* was the most common incorrect response. It could not be given credit because it did not convey the strength of the emotion that the word *thrilled* carried.

Furtively: secretly

Deserted: empty was the most common answer. *Lonely* was a common wrong answer

Speeding: moving very fast/ quickly. Answers which made use of the root form “speed” were not awarded any marks.

Question 9 – Extended Writing

Question 9 is the extended writing task. Candidates were asked to write a composition of about 200-250 words out of a choice of three titles: a narrative, a descriptive and an argumentative topic.

The following general advice should be helpful to candidates:

- Candidates should identify the key words in the essay titles so as to satisfy the requirements of the question.
- Candidates are advised to stay within the word limit and to check their work thoroughly.
- The use of appropriate and varied vocabulary is strongly encouraged.
- Candidates should be precise in the use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Varied sentence structures should be used in their writing.
- Candidates are recommended to write in a logical and coherent manner.

Narrative Writing

On the whole, performance in the narrative task was satisfactory. This year, candidates were asked to write a story based on the line “*The situation looked hopeless, but we could not give up...*” and this was a popular option among candidates.

The best candidates produced detailed storylines, using very accurate G/S/P and wide vocabulary. They used varied sentence types to sustain the reader’s interest throughout. Weaker candidates, on the other hand, struggled with developing a plot and used very insecure language throughout. Sentence separation issues were particularly noticeable in these scripts.

The following candidate responses illustrate examiners’ expectations in narrative essays.

Example 1

The situation looked hopeless, but we could not give up, we absolutely needed to help our grandfather! This is the traumatic story of what happened to me and my little brother.

Last year, during the holidays, my brother *George* and I were going to spend a day at my grandfathers' place. We were both keen and excited as we knew we were going to have a delightful time there. At eight o'clock, my grandfather came to pick me up. The trip was going so well. We were singing and admiring the forest and the meandering rivers. We finally arrived and needed to turn in a dark alley.

As soon as my grandfather walked on the pavement, someone in a designer tracksuit and with a balaclava on his head violently pushed him. We were bewildered and panic-stricken. The man took a stone and started hitting my grandfather on his head. Me and *George* rushed and kicked the beefy man in his stomach. Unfortunately the latter was stronger than us and replied us in the twinkling of an eye. The situation looked hopeless, but we could not give up! While I was still in a predicament, *George* yelled "Thief" and as soon as the man heard that, he furtively escaped.

My grandfather was taken to the hospital and was given medical care, but a few days after, he was fit. As we say, every cloud has a silver lining.

This is a clear Band 1 essay. The candidate has an elaborate storyline and the language is essentially very accurate throughout. The vocabulary used is impressive (*meandering rivers, designer tracksuit, balaclava, beefy man, in a predicament, silver lining* etc.). There is also a variety of sentence structures used and the story flows naturally. An essay that satisfies these criteria will score highly.

Example 2

I was quietly drinking my cup of coffee with my partner Sam when suddenly we heard something. Rushing to the swimming pool found on the ground Floor. We saw a headless body floating on the water. Blood was everywhere. "It is a murder!" Sam said.

As we were police officers, we were investigating on the scene. Searching for the head for hours, we finally got it. Sam was terrified and he was shaking like a leaf. It was Sam's father. There were no evidence why someone would kill his generous father. Sam desperately searching for clues, and me searching for any camera video that could show the assassin's face.

Unfortunately, all camera was off. It seems that it was a plannified plan. "The situation looked hopeless, but we could not give up." Around three o'clock in the evening, a security guard came to me and told me that it was one of the south side gang of the region. So I started interrogating him if he could describe me the man. Apparently he had a beard and he was tall.

Having enough information Sam and I went to their base. We were watching him for couple of minutes. And instantly he took a gun and shoot at himself. Likely he knew that we were going to arrest him. After that, each of us went home, and till that day no one knows if the real assassin were in the region.

This is an interesting response. The storyline is well developed and there is a creditable attempt to create suspense. The vocabulary is ambitious as well. However, the language is often insecure, with numerous grammatical, spelling and punctuation mistakes. For this reason, this response scores well, but cannot be awarded the best marks.

Example 3

It was a Saturday morning, we had an idea that was in our mind for a long time, so we went to "plaine champaign" to collect some "goyave de Chine".

We took the bus at 9 am, we arrive there 9 o'clock once we were there we started to collect those delicious fruits. The worse happen when me and my fell into the forest below.

I opened my eyes to see Jack crying. He has a broken leg, he couldn't walk. So I got up and grab Jack and started for search to find a shelter because it was to rain, Fortunately we find a hole in a big tree we settled in the tree, tear a piece of t-shirt to make a on my leg which was bleeding.

Then I remember the documentary that there was a cabin that was visited and there a phone there. Once we got out, we started to search we couldn't find anything. The situation looked hopeless, but we could not give up, after some time we found it we had some time so I called my other friend who called the fire fighters we were safe.

A helicopter arrived so we got out of the forest safely my parents was because my friend called them I was happy to see them and we all go home.

While there is a developed storyline in this response, the language used remains the main issue. Errors are frequent – from sentence separation issues to wrong use of tenses and spelling mistakes, For this reason, this response is towards the lower end of the mark spectrum.

Descriptive Writing

The descriptive essay, **Describe the scene in a crowded bus**, was attempted by a good number of candidates. The better candidates managed to describe the scene in a crowded bus properly, creating the right atmosphere consistently. The best essays made full use of all the senses while describing. They often demonstrated a range of vocabulary which was truly impressive. *"Travelling by bus is always something that I used to fancy..."*, *"harrowing experience during my bus trips"*, *" I somehow managed to push and jostle my way into the bus."*, *"people were packed like sardines ..."*, *"the searing heat made the atmosphere unbearable"*, *"children were crying inconsolably..."*; *"my toes were trodden upon..."*

Weaker candidates were generally those who gave a narrative account of travelling by bus instead of focusing on a description. They relied more heavily on listing aspects of the crowded bus rather than describing the scene. Some descriptions were not convincing and seemed to have little to do with a crowded bus.

The following candidate responses illustrate examiners' expectations in descriptive essays.

Example 1

A bus is used by mostly everyone who doesn't have a car but a crowded bus is a nightmare for some people and myself. And unfortunately, I had to go in a crowded bus every day.

A crowded bus is full of all kinds of people who are old, who are kids and teenagers and also middle-aged persons. In this crowded bus, I can see mostly middle-aged people and teenagers in different school uniforms. This bus is full like a sardine box. There are persons standing from the back till the stairs of the bus. At the back I can hear some boys laughing loudly and very annoyingly.

But the girls sitting in the middle seats of the bus are very calm and are listening to their music. The middle-aged persons look they are going to work. Some of them are talking on their phone and some are struggling not to fall down. The few old people are just sitting and looking outside. The atmosphere is very hot and I feel like I am burning. I can feel sweat going down my face. It is only morning and I'm already feeling tired as if I was working all day.

I am being squeezed like a sandwich and I don't like it. I hate crowded buses. I wish I had a car.

Although there are some minor grammatical errors, this is an excellent descriptive essay. The candidate focuses on what (s)he hears and what (s)he sees to describe the scene on the crowded bus. There is a good variety of sentence structures and the vocabulary is accurate. The images used are relevant and evocative (*This bus is full like a sardine box; I feel like I am burning; I am being squeezed like a sandwich*) and these earn the candidate credit.

Example 2

I left work very late and got to catch the last UBS bus of the day. It was already crowded and full that I could not get a seat place and I needed to stand like a zombie.

I was really annoyed at that time, I could hear groups of people chatting like a chattering box people giggling, talking snoring and even glaring at me. I got to smell sweaty armpits of people which I could anything about. I wanted to see the beautiful scenery outside but in vain, I was seeing only people's head. My blood was boiling inside and, my head was going explode.

I just removed my earphone and listened to some soft and good mood music and still I could not get over this very noisy and disturbed atmosphere. All I was imagining was getting out of this hell as soon as possible. I was stuck in there looking as miserable as my lonely dog sitting in the corner of my room.

After some times, I got off at mu destination angrily with my sored and numbed leg knowing that tomorrow I would be bearing all that pain again.

This response starts well. The second paragraph is all about describing what is seen, heard and even smelled! However, the description is not sustained, with the candidate spending the rest of the work writing about what he is doing rather than the scene of the bus. The language used is also often insecure. For these two reasons, this response cannot aspire to be in the top band.

Example 3

It was on school days. The bus was full of passengers there. So much people in the bus. The time that I get in the bus there were not so much persone and I got a place for sitting. When arrived at the bus station there were such many people in the bus that the bus controller could not even work. Insted of sixty passengers there were more than seventy passengers.

There were an very old person standing. She didn't get a place to sit down and nobody even tell her to sit down in their place by volonteers. The bus was driving fast as the old woman fell down. Everybody stand up and help her. The old woman has been hurt every where in the body. She was getting so much and she said that she could not stand up quickly. I felt vey sad for the old woman. Someone gave her some water drink. She was just showing that she can't stand up and her body is full of pain. Anybody didn't even call the ambulance for giving her the first Aid. The atmospehere in the bus was looking like very sadly. Then the bus controller came to me and ask me for calling the ambulance for the old woman.

For me we should give priority for old person because they don't have same energy as us more younger than them. I think that the woman got a fracture in her leg because she says that she can't stand up. This is how the day went wrong.

This response is typical of the weaker responses obtained in the descriptive writing task. Such responses often start with an attempt at a description but quickly evolve into a narration. In the response above, the work starts with a few lines about the number of passengers on the bus but the main part of the writing is about an incident about an old woman who broke her leg after falling in the bus. This response is also penalised for very insecure language throughout.

Argumentative writing

The argumentative essay this year was: **The internet has improved people's lives. Do you agree?**

This was chosen by a fair number of candidates. There were a few extremely thoughtful essays which explored the advantages and disadvantages of the internet which was seen as a major technological tool in present times. Some impressive writing was seen, as in the extracts below

“ The world has undergone a sea of changes thanks to the power of the WorldWide Web. From basic needs to the utmost luxuries, almost every facet of our lifestyle is now impacted by the internet...”

“ all over the world, online education has brought a revolution in the field of education. In this scenario, online courses are a great benefit to students.”

“ from the necessities to the luxuries, you get to shop for everything online. Another great thing about online shopping, is that we can enjoy very good bargains...”

“ like all technologies though, the internet has a dark side. Things such as inappropriate content or predators in chat rooms trying to ensnare young children...”

On the whole, however, most candidates had difficulty with this type of writing. In particular, it was noted that even when they had relevant ideas, they had difficulty to organize them into a coherent argument. Very often they merely listed ideas one after the other.

The sample of essays below illustrates the standards expected by examiners for the argumentative writing task.

Example 1

The internet is a large network of devices spanning over entire continents. It has revolutionized most aspects of life, from agriculture to education. I believe that it has dramatically improved people's lives.

The internet has enabled innovations that would have been unthinkable of fifty years ago. It has allowed for new ways of communication, for e.g. social networks. It is over the internet that smart devices are connected, devices that make people lives so much easier. The concept of working from home is made possible by platforms that run on the internet. In repressive autocracies, where censorship is everywhere, the internet allows users to come together discuss in a free, open way, without the fear of persecution.

Information, once only accessible in books is now accessible to everyone with a smartphone or laptop. The internet has democratized access to information. School research projects are no longer tedious because of the accessibility of information.

Like all technologies though, the internet has a dark side, things such as inappropriate content, or predators in chat rooms, trying to ensnare young children. There are also people who got addicted to games running on the internet. By mistake, young children are end up on illicit content meant for adults.

I believe that the benefits of the internet far outweigh the potential risks. The internet has so far improved people's lives in a way no other technology has.

This is a truly outstanding piece of argumentative writing. The work is well organised, the content is relevant and thoughtful and the language sophisticated. A balanced conclusion is also offered. What is truly impressive is the level of the vocabulary used (*repressive autocracies, fear of persecution, ensnaring young children* etc...). The complex syntax used (e.g *Information, once only accessible in books, is now accessible to everyone...*) also suggests that this is a candidate who masters English at a very high level.

Example 2

The internet has improved people's lives and I agree. It has changed our lives totally and we became more dependent on it. However, it has disadvantages and advantages.

The disadvantages of the internet are that we became too dependent during these past few years. It makes us not move and it makes us more lazy. Sometimes, it makes us forget about something important. Sometimes on the internet there are some bad contents that are not good.

The advantage of the internet is that it improves our quality of life and offers advantages like online shopping for food, clothing and stationery for work and school. It helps us to pay bills from home and anywhere we want. It helps us also for studies like research. The internet can be also a platform for entertainment like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

However, the internet is great but we have to know how to use it because it has good and bad things on it.

This is a good response, but which lacks the necessary sophistication to aspire to the highest marks on offer. The content is relevant and is fairly well organised, with one paragraph about the advantages and one about the disadvantages. However, there are noticeable errors and the language is often clumsy (*It makes us to make no movement; there are some bad content that is not good* etc.) On the whole, while there are positives in this, it remains an average effort.

Example 3

Long ago in 1920 there were many people who were illiterate. And many children also they didn't go to school. Because their parents don't have enough money for their school fees.

Nowadays there are many people literate and rich. Because of the internet they became very matured. They go to school also but some of them don't because they still don't have money. Some of them didn't go to school but they are good in using the internet.

In 2021 there are many small children who know how to use the internet. Very soon I think our future generation in school children will use the internet. It will be more better for education and facilities also. The internet is a very good thing you can search every on the Google, YouTube etc. In many offices they use the internet. Nowadays everywhere we use the internet. The internet is a very useful thing now.

This is a poor response on the whole. The arguments are barely relevant – the candidate is talking about the internet but is not making any real attempt at addressing the question set or making any clear argument. The whole work reads like a rather random list of ideas, with no real engagement with the given topic. The quality of the English is also poor throughout, resulting in this response getting a low mark.

Question 10: Literature

In the literature component, candidates' knowledge and ability to appreciate a variety of literary texts and demonstrate analytical skills will be assessed. Other skills that can be assessed include showing awareness of message, making links between text and life experiences, responding empathetically, analyzing character, plot, themes and expressing sensitivity to language and the use of stylistic devices. The question will be set based on an unseen extract (taken from one of the three genres - drama, poetry, prose).

This year, the assessment was based on an adaptation of a Seamus Heaney poem, *Digging*. Candidates were assessed on their ability to identify specific literary devices, their understanding of specific parts of the poem, and their interpretation of the main message of the poem.

On the whole, candidates did well on the tasks asking them to identify literary devices and questions requiring an understanding of parts of the poem. The last question, asking for a personal interpretation of the message of the poem supported by close reference to the poem, was well attempted by a small number of candidates only.

Item 1:

Generally well answered. Candidates had little difficulty identifying the simile *snug as a gun*.

Item 2:

Most candidates had little difficulty identifying the rhyming words *sound, ground*.

Item 3 (i) and (ii)

This item assessed knowledge of narrative voice. Most candidates correctly identified that the poem used a first person narrative. Evidence of this was the use of *my* and *I* throughout.

Item 4(i)

This item assessed understanding of the line

*“By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.”*

Candidates fared well generally on this item, displaying a clear understanding of the lines and addressing the key idea that both father and grandfather could farm.

Item 4 (ii)

Candidates were required to demonstrate knowledge of the following line

“But I’ve no spade to follow men like them.”

The key idea here was on the “intention” of the narrator not to opt for farming. Credit was also given to the literal meaning of the speaker not having a tool to become a farmer. An important number of candidates scored the 1 mark on offer on this item.

Item 4 (iii)

This item tested understanding of the lines

“The pen rests

I’ll dig with it.”

The key idea here was how the narrator will use his pen / education to pave the path for his future (unlike his forefathers, who relied on farming to make a living). This was satisfactorily attempted on the whole.

Item 5

This item asked candidates to offer their own interpretation of the main message of the poem. While any interpretation is possible in principle, credit can only be given to interpretations which are defended and justified by close textual reference.

Candidates had to motivate their responses with reference to the text in detail about the poem. Evidence of analysis that allows candidate to give an insightful response was rewarded by examiners. Possible interpretations of this poem included but were not limited to:

- Identity and admiration for hard work.
- Generational change (from farming to education)
- The importance of education
- Progress/Ambition of new generations
- The idea of digging with a pen – revolutionary ideas, social change.

The following samples illustrate the range of answers obtained this year. They are provided to give educators an idea of standards and of examiners’ expectations.

Example 1

The poem shows how everyone should focus in their own jobs and excel at it. The narrator relates about how skillful, talented and powerful his father and grandfather are with their spades. The narrator also depicts hard work and resilience when he says that his grandfather only posed to drink some milk and resumed his work right away. The grandfather was very disciplined. To sum up, the poem is about a child who looks up to his forefathers and their way of doing things neatly and skilfully. And in the end, attempts to do the same with his own pen and says “I’ll dig with it”.

This piece of work scores highly because the candidate offers a clear interpretation of the poem and defends it robustly. There is evidence of analysis and the candidates supports his answer with close reference to the poem.

Example 2

The poem was about being strong/motivated. The narrator said that "by God the old man could handle a spade". To be able to handle something, one must have the will to do so and should also be motivated and strong to do so. Despite being old, they weren't resting like the oldies but instead were digging into the ground.

This response shows evidence of understanding of the poem. It goes beyond a literal reading of the poem and recognises that one key idea in the poem is ambition/motivation. However, there is not enough textual reference for this to warrant the best marks.

Example 3

I think that this poem is about the hard work of a person to help his family. In the poem, it is said that "my father digging" which means that he is working hard.

Although not irrelevant, this response is very literal. There is no real attempt to offer an interpretation beyond what is literally written. As such, there is no evidence of analysis. It was common to find such responses in the scripts of weaker candidates.

Example 4

It is about a person who is lazy as he says "the pen rests; snug as a gun". His father is doing much more work than him. The poem is also about the heritage of the family

This response shows very little understanding of the poem. It looks like random statements about the poem with no attempt made at offering an interpretation and defending it.