



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

**MAURITIUS
EXAMINATIONS
SYNDICATE**

**NCE 2024
English**

Subject code: N500

EXAMINERS' REPORT

April 2025

Key Messages

- The progress seen in last year's session was maintained this year, with progress seen in the reading and writing tasks.
- Most candidates have acquired the essential skills in basic grammar, reading, and writing.
- Most candidates have acquired basic English vocabulary. More sophisticated vocabulary, however, remains the hallmark of stronger candidates.
- In literature, most candidates have been able to identify simple literary devices and their functions.
- In grammar, candidates had difficulty with
 - The correct preposition to be used after the verb *go*. Many candidates still say **go at* instead of *go to* (Q1, item 3)
 - Transforming sentences into the negative form. Candidates struggle with the correct syntax and grammatical form required in such transformations. (Q1, item 12).
 - Transforming sentences into the interrogative form (Q1, item 14).
 - Transforming into the indirect speech (Q1, item)
 - Plurals in structures starting with 'one (Q5, item 1 - *one of the most valuable stamps*)
- In Reading Comprehension, literal understanding has been generally mastered by most candidates. Difficulties remain with
 - Indiscriminate lifting
 - Higher-order reading skills (inference, chronology of events, personal response...)
 - Vocabulary in context
- Extended writing remains a challenge for many candidates. 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. Evidence of narrative techniques must be visible.
- Descriptive essays require candidates to show a wide range of vocabulary to create an atmosphere. Far too often narrative essays were produced instead of descriptive ones. Evidence of sensory language must be shown.
- Argumentative essays require relevant information to be organised coherently and ideas need to flow logically. Some candidates simply listed ideas one after the other.
- Candidates are reminded that no credit will be given if they use material from elsewhere in the question paper to write their essays.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 – Basic Grammar

Question 1 assesses a range of basic grammatical concepts in English. The grammatical items evaluated were pronouns (Personal, Reflexive and Interrogative), the use of tense (future tense), prepositions, comparisons, conditional structure, quantifiers, correct use of capital letters, tense transformation (past tense), interrogative and negative sentence formation, use of conjunction and the ability to transform sentences from the direct to the indirect speech. The best-done items were those dealing with personal and reflexive pronouns, common prepositions and interrogative word. Candidates faced more difficulty with items assessing the transformation of sentences from direct to indirect speech and transforming sentences into interrogative and negative forms.

Item 1 – This item was well done overall. This sentence requires a superlative comparison. Some candidates did not realise what was needed and gave ‘stronger’ as answer, incorrectly.

Item 2 – This item on the use of uncountable nouns was problematic to some candidates. Milk is an uncountable noun. When talking about uncountable nouns in a negative context, we use the quantifier “much”.

Item 3 – This item on preposition was mostly well-attempted by the candidates. They understood that the required preposition (We went **to** the park for a picnic) needed to indicate movement toward a place.

Item 4 – This item tested the use of the personal pronoun. The pronoun "him" is used as the object of the verb to refer to a male subject (brother). Candidates did well in this part.

Item 5 – This item assessed the ability of candidates to use the future tense in context. The keyword "tomorrow" indicates the action will happen in the future. Among the options, the only verb tense that refers to the future is "will come." It was well attempted by most candidates.

Item 6 – This item assessed the use of the reflexive pronoun. The subject is plural ("Sarah and her friend"), so the reflexive pronoun must match a plural subject. The correct option was Option D, themselves, as it refers to plural subjects performing the action on themselves. This item was well attempted by most candidates.

Item 7 – This item on prepositions was mostly well-attempted by the candidates. It tested the correct use of prepositions for time. The phrase "in ten minutes" indicates the amount of time until an event occurs.

Item 8 – This item tested the use of the interrogative pronoun used to ask questions relating to a place. The question asks for specific information about France's capital, requiring "what." It was generally well done by candidates

Item 9 – This item tested the use of the correct verb tense in conditional sentences (First Conditional). Candidates had to show understanding of the fact that since the first verb was a conditional clause: if + present simple tense, the following verb that in the main clause would have to be in the future tense in this context. Most candidates attempted this item correctly.

Item 10 – This item tested whether candidates knew when capital letters would be required in the given sentence. The aim was to identify proper nouns (e.g., names, days of the week, and months) and the first word of a sentence, all of which require capitalisation, as shown below:

- *anne should be corrected to Anne (a proper noun).*
- *thursday should be corrected to Thursday (name of a day).*

Most candidates attempted this item successfully.

Item 11 – This item tested candidates' ability to transform sentences using the simple past tense while maintaining grammatical accuracy and coherence. Candidates had to begin the sentence with the word "Yesterday" and adjust the tense to reflect a past event ("is late" changes to "was late"). It did not pose any difficulty to most candidates.

Item 12 – This item tested candidates' ability of forming questions using auxiliary verbs. The declarative sentence had to be transformed into a question by inverting the subject-verb order ("James has" → "Has James"). Some candidates lost marks because of wrong syntax, wrong tense and missing interrogative mark, as shown in the examples below:

**Has James forgotten his bag*

**Has James forgot his bag?*

Item 13 – This task assessed candidates' skills in sentence combination and the use of subordinating conjunctions. They had to link sentences correctly, using the conjunction *although* appropriately. It was successfully attempted on the whole. Some candidates lost marks by not paying attention to the coherence of tenses in the sentence: **Although she had not finish her homework she went to sleep.*

Item 14 – This item tested candidates' knowledge of negative structures in English. They had to show knowledge both of the syntax of negative structures in English and of the grammatical form of the verb that is required in such structures. Many candidates struggled with this item, with a variety of wrong answers visible in the work of candidates, such as

**Peter did not bought a book*

**Peter does not buys a book*

This is an aspect of English syntax where remedial work is necessary in the classroom.

Item 15 – This item tested candidates' ability to transform a sentence from direct into indirect speech using correct syntax, punctuation and grammar.

The expected answer was: *"The policeman asked him if / whether he had seen the accident."*

This item posed difficulty to many candidates. They seemed unaware of what was expected from them in this question. Common wrong answers included the following:

** The policeman asked him if he saw the accident.*

** The policeman ask him if he had seen the accident.*

** The policeman asked me if I had seen the accident.*

Question No 2 – Basic Vocabulary

This question assessed knowledge of basic vocabulary items and on the whole, it was very well done, suggesting that knowledge of the basic vocabulary items has been acquired by most. Candidates are encouraged to read widely to build up their vocabulary, which will help them attempt these types of questions.

Item 1 – It is very **cold** today. Make sure you wear warm clothes.

Item 2 – The students **complained** that the school was dirty.

Item 3 – I'm **confident** I will do well in my test. I have revised well.

Item 4 – The 24th of May is a Friday. I have checked the **calendar**.

Item 5 – The **musicians** in this orchestra are all very young.

Question No 3 – Basic Reading Comprehension

Question 3 assessed reading comprehension at a basic level, in particular the ability to locate explicitly stated information. A poster about a pet adoption event, organised by a fictitious organisation *Mauritius Animal Savers*, was set. 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 no credit could be given to those who resorted to indiscriminate lifting as this task required brief and accurate answers. While most items were generally well answered by candidates, the following items were less well done:

Item 1 – *Which event is being organised?*

The expected answer was *[Annual] Pet Adoption Day*. A common wrong answer was *Mauritius Animal Savers*

Item 2 – *Which organisation is holding this event?*

The expected answer was *All members of the public/ Everyone/ The public*. A common wrong answer was *Pet Adoption Day*. Candidates are reminded of the importance of answering with precision and avoiding indiscriminate lifting.

Question 4 – Word Formation

In this question, candidates were assessed on word formation in context. A short passage about the rotation of Earth was set, with the words needing transformation given in brackets. This question was successfully attempted by many candidates, but less able candidates faced difficulty when attempting items 2 and 3.

Item 1 – *Did you know that the Earth spins really fast?*

The adverbial form of the adjective 'real' was required here for emphasis and this was well attempted by most candidates.

Item 2 – *This amazing speed is why we experience day and night.*

For item 2, candidates were required to transform the verb 'amaze' into the adjective 'amazing'. A significant number of candidates, however, opted for the adjective 'amazed' indicating that these two adjectives easily lead to confusion and are incorrectly used interchangeably. **Amazed* could not be given credit.

Item 3 – *As the Earth spins, different parts of the Earth face the sun, making it daytime in those places.*

The present participle form of the verb *make* was needed for item 3 to describe the action "different parts of the Earth" were leading to. The expected answer was 'making' for Item 3. This item was challenging to many candidates.

Item 4 – *When other parts rotate away from the sun, they experience darkness.*

The noun form *darkness* of the adjective *dark* was required here, and this was generally well attempted by candidates.

Item 5 – *This rotation happens every 24 hours, giving us a cycle of days and nights.*

Most candidates fared well in this item, which required the verb *rotate* to be transformed into the noun *rotation*.

Question 5 – Error Hunt

This exercise assesses whether candidates can correct grammatical mistakes such as plural, articles, pronouns (personal), correct verb tense, and agreement of verbs. The candidates were required to correct the underlined mistakes.

Item 1 – The singular form of the verb to be, is, was well-attempted by most of the candidates.

Item 2 – The plural form of the noun, *stamps* (one of the rarest and most valuable stamps) was required here. Many candidates had difficulty correcting this mistake properly. The structure 'One of the ...' continues to pose problem to candidates, who struggle to see that such structures require a plural noun.

Item 3 – Candidates had to change *this* to its plural form *these*. This was properly done by most candidates.

Item 4 – For item 4, which was mostly well done, candidates were expected to correct the spelling mistake and write *error* properly. Candidates, generally had no difficulty in this item.

Item 5 – Candidates had to correctly conjugate the verb *to hold* in the 3rd person, singular in the simple present tense. This item presented no challenge to stronger candidates, but a noticeable number had difficulty with this item.

Question 6 – Cloze Text

Question 6 is the open Cloze text – a higher-order reading task, which aims to assess candidates' reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar skills.

It requires candidates to use the given context and draw on their linguistic knowledge to make educated guesses of which word might be suitable in the given gaps. Many candidates found this task challenging. Item 2, in particular, was wrongly answered by many candidates.

Candidates are reminded that it is important to use the correct spelling and grammatical form of the word to be used in the given gaps.

Item 1 – *It gives you more energy, makes you feel good, and makes you sleep better.*

Most candidates offered a suitable answer. A number of options were accepted provided they conveyed meaning such as well, soundly, profoundly etc.

Item 2 – *It also strengthens your bones and muscles.*

This item was found challenging by many candidates. It was one of the most problematic items in the Question Paper. Many candidates lost marks by failing with candidates missing the 's' meaning that the subject of the sentence did not match the verb describing its action. The word in itself was also wrongly written in many scripts.

Item 3 – *Try to exercise at least one hour every day.*

Most candidates offered a plausible answer to this item.

Item 4 – *This could be anything that gets you going like dancing, or jogging/walking etc.*

A wide range of answers related to physical activities were acceptable here and this item was generally well attempted.

Item 5 – *Moreover, exercise can help you to improve your concentration.*

Many candidates were able to find a plausible option for this gap. A few proposed alternative answers such as *allow* were also accepted here.

Question 7 – Functional Writing

Question 7 is the functional writing task, with candidates required to write a short transactional text of 50-75 words. They are essentially assessed on their ability to write a short text using accurate G/S/P and showing good awareness of audience and purpose for the given task. Candidates are not expected to elaborate on the given points but simply to address them clearly, using the right tone and language. It is encouraging to note that a big proportion of candidates fare very well on this question, showing good mastery of writing accurate English.

In this year's task, candidates were asked to write a short note to their friends to organize a class party to celebrate the end of the school year. The purpose and situation proved to be very straightforward for most candidates. A successful answer had to address the following prompts:

- When will the party be held?
- At what time will the party start and end?

- What will you and your friends do?
- What should each one of you bring?
- How will your teachers help?

For bullet point 1, candidates had to mention when the party will be held. This was achieved by most candidates. However, quite a few got confused with the word 'when'. They understood it as 'where' and gave information which was not really relevant.

For bullet point 2, candidates were asked at what time will the party start and end. Many gave relevant answers.

For bullet point 3, candidates had to write about what they and their friends will do. Many of them mentioned that they will organize a bring and share or many activities like dancing, games and musical chair, all of which was relevant.

For bullet point 4, candidates were required to write about what each one of them should bring. Most candidates wrote that their friends should bring snacks and drinks.

Bullet point 5, required the candidates to write about how their teachers will help. This point was adequately addressed by most candidates who wrote that their teachers will decorate the classroom or will bring food for them.

Successful candidates addressed all prompts given. Excellent responses showed clear awareness of audience and purpose, with all required points adequately addressed. They used 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 briefly. 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

Dear friends

I hope that you are fine. I am writing this short note to inform you about the class party which will be held this Friday 7th December 2024. It will start at 9 o'clock in the morning and end at 6 o'clock in the evening. During the celebration, we will sing, dance and participate in other enjoyable activities. Each of you can bring snacks such as fried chicken or chips and soft drinks. Finally, our teachers will decorate the hall to make the room more attractive and colourful.

I hope to see all of you on Friday.

Yours

Tom

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. It is noteworthy that such simple, straightforward responses can score very high marks.

Example 2

Dear friends

I hope you are well. As a class captain, I organize a class party to celebrate the end of the school year. The party will be at 30th October 2024. It will start at 9.00 and end at 16.00. I will bring some decoration and we will decorate the class. We should normally bring foods or a soft drinks. The teachers will organize all the activities.

I hope you will come to the party. Thank you!

Yours

Wayne

This response showed clear awareness of audience and purpose. However, the response had some occasional slips, which meant that this script could not be in the top band.

Example 3

Dear friends

I'm writing this note to informed you that I will organized a class party to celebrated the end of the school year. The class party will be held on 30 November 2024. The party will started at 10.30 a.m and will end at 14.30 p.m. my friends and I will organized some activities like dancing, playing "UNO" and many other activities. You should bring some snacks and soft drinks. The teacher will help us for the food.

Hope you will come.

Yours

Your class captain

Serena

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

Example 4

Dear Ayush

Hello Ayush, I invited you to a party. I invited all your family. It was Sunday morning.

Date 29 December 2024. Time: 7.00- 17.00. location Palmar beach.

Activities: Domino, carom, card, football, volleyball.

Food: samosa, briyani, chicken, salad.

It was very funing.

Bye see you next week.

Yours

Mr Girish

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

Question 8 – Extended Reading Comprehension (Lavina)

This exercise assesses learner's ability to read and understand an extended passage of approximately 600 words in English. A range of reading comprehension questions are set, including literal understanding, inferential understanding, knowledge of vocabulary in context, overall understanding of the text and writer's craft.

This year, a narrative passage was set in which a young girl called Maya and her younger brother, Leo, unexpectedly find themselves alone at home during a storm.

Candidates generally performed adequately on questions that called for a literal understanding of the passage. The difficulty for weaker candidates arose with inferential questions that required a deeper level of understanding and interpretation of the text and where candidates had to draw a conclusion based on information implied or suggested in the passage. Items 2, 7, 8, 11 and 12 were found challenging by a number of candidates.

Candidates are reminded of the following:

- Lifting is permitted where it is specifically asked for, but they will be penalised for **excess information**.
- Where candidates have been instructed to use their **own words**, they will be penalised for lifting from the text.
- Grammatical and spelling mistakes are not penalised if meaning and understanding are made clear.

Item 1 – *Why were Leo and Maya alone at home?*

The expected answer was *Their parents were **stuck** at work*, [unable to drive home] [because of the weather/storm.] Understanding was clear here from the overwhelmingly successful responses.

Item 2 – *What was different about Leo on that day?*

The expected answer was any one of the following:

- *He was not as energetic as usual.*
- *His mood was unusual / different.*

The lift from the passage was also accepted: *Leo, usually full of energy, was huddled under a thick blanket.* Most candidates were able to point out the comparison- that is Leo was not his usual self on that day/he was calmer compared to other days.

Item 3 – *Apart from the weather, what was troubling Maya?*

The expected answer was *Her brother's unusual mood.* The most successful candidates rightly pointed out the answer referring to Leo's mood on that particular day.

Item 4 – *Maya forced a smile. Why did she have to force a smile?*

The expected answer was any of the following:

- *To reassure Leo / so that Leo would not be scared.*
- *She was scared herself.*
- *To appear confident and not to appear weak.*

Successful responses selected the correct information from the passage where candidates had to rely on careful reading of the lines in this paragraph.

Item 5 – *What made "matters worse"?*

The expected answer was *The lights went out / the room went dark / The lights flickered and died.*

This question required a literal response and was correctly answered by most candidates.

Item 6 – *Explain why Maya hesitated to call her parents.*

The expected answer was *She knew her parents would be very worried / She did not want to make the situation worse for them.*

Many candidates identified the correct answer, some even providing the full lift, which was acceptable for this item.

Item 7 – *The minutes "crawled" by. According to you, why did Leo and Maya feel that time was moving very slowly?*

Any one of the following was considered acceptable:

- *They were scared / terrified / anxious.*
- *It was a stressful situation.*

This item assessed inferential understanding, requiring candidates to read paragraph 4 carefully and then make an educated guess as to why time was moving very slowly.

Candidates were penalised when they included answers such as *They had nothing to do / they had no distraction such as the Internet.*

Item 8 – *Pick out the word from this paragraph which shows that the storm was very strong.*

Candidates had to give the word which showed that the storm was very strong. The expected answer was 'raged' and this was well attempted on the whole. Some candidates

were penalised for lifting the whole sentence without underlining/ highlighting the required word.

Item 9 – *Give two ways in which Maya comforted Leo.*

Two limbs were required to score the 2 marks on offer for this item. A few candidates lifted complete sentences from the paragraph to answer the question. Lifting was acceptable if both limbs were present and as long as the sentence did not include any excess information.

The following key ideas on how Maya comforted Leo were accepted:

- *She read stories to him.*
- *She sat close to Leo.*
- *She held him tightly (to comfort him in the dark).*

Item 10 – *Despite her fear, Maya went to see what had happened. What does this show about her character?*

This item required candidates to describe Maya’s character and was rather well tackled. Candidates came up with a variety of adjectives to describe Maya. Any plausible inference was accepted, such as *She was brave / courageous / strong / fearless / daring / determined.*

Item 11 – *Maya “heaved a sigh of relief” (lines 26-27). According to you, why was she relieved?*

Candidates had to infer why Maya was relieved. The key ideas were that there was no threat after all and that the shape was only a dog / not a monster / thief / intruder / stranger / ghost. This item posed difficulty to candidates, who had difficulty to infer from the given information.

Item 12 – *According to you, why was Leo nervous? (line 30). Give two reasons.*

This item required candidates to say why Leo was nervous. A wide variety of responses was accepted for this question. There were a few possible inferences that could have been made from the information provided in the text, as shown below:

- *He was alone / his sister was not with him.*
- *He did not know what was happening to Maya.*
- *He was in the dark.*
- *He feared it could be a thief / intruder / any other threat.*
- *He did not know who made that noise.*

Item 13 – *Leo offered the dog some of his food. What does this show about his character?*

This item required candidates to describe Leo’s character when he offered food to the dog. Candidates came up with a variety of adjectives to describe Leo’s personality. Examples of accepted answers are:

- *He is a dog-lover.*
- *He is generous.*
- *He is caring / compassionate*
- *He is helpful / soft-hearted*
- *He is a good / kind person*

Item 14 – *At the end of the storm, why did the children feel “a sense of accomplishment”? (line 35). Give two reasons.*

Candidates were required to give two reasons why the children felt ‘a sense of accomplishment’ at the end of the storm. Any two of the following key ideas were accepted.

- *They had faced their fears.*
- *They found a new friend.*
- *They had saved a dog.*
- *They had handled themselves.*

Common wrong answers included:

- *All was back to normal.*
- *The storm had subsided.*
- *The electricity came back.*

Item 15 – Vocabulary

Item 15 was the vocabulary question, where candidates had to explain the meaning of specific words as used in the context of the passage.

In this year’s examination, MCQs were set to assess candidates’ understanding of certain vocabulary items.

- The first item was ‘unexpectedly’ and the correct answer was A (Without warning). Most candidates had little difficulty with this item.
- The second item was ‘crept’ and the correct answer was B (moved slowly). This was correctly attempted by most candidates.
- The last item was ‘subsided’ and the correct answer was D (lost intensity). This item proved to be challenging to many candidates, with a significant number incorrectly opting for Option B (went away).

Question 9 – Extended Writing

Question 9 is the extended writing task. Candidates were required 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 guidelines should be helpful to candidates:

Candidates should pay attention to the key words in the essay titles so as to produce a relevant piece of writing.

- Candidates are advised to respect the word limit and to check their work thoroughly.
- The use of accurate and varied vocabulary is strongly encouraged.
- Candidates should be precise in the use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Candidates are recommended to use a variety of sentence structures in their writing.
- Candidates are recommended to write in a logical and coherent manner
- Candidates should bear the following in mind:
 - Under no account should candidates reproduce material or derive inspiration from material found elsewhere in the question paper while writing their essay.
 - Candidates should refrain from using ideas/expressions retrieved from the reading comprehension text while writing their essay.

Descriptive Writing

Describe the scene in your neighbourhood on the day of a major festival or cultural event. (Remember you must describe what you see and hear, the atmosphere, the people, and how you feel.)

This descriptive task proved fairly popular, and a significant number of candidates who opted for it were able to describe the scene in their neighbourhood on the day of a major festival or cultural event in detail. Stronger responses generally had a strong sense of the appropriate form for the task: description, a clear focus on the question as well as relevant content.

Candidates chose to describe scenes from events such as music festivals, book festivals, chocolate festivals, Coca Cola festival, spring day celebrations as well as several religious festivals. Strong candidates structured their responses by focusing on how the festival brought people from their neighbourhood together. There was also intentional focus on the following elements from the question – namely what you see and hear, the atmosphere, the people and how you feel – to fully achieve the task set. The effective development of these elements using wide and precise vocabulary and complex, accurately constructed sentences elevated responses to this question.

Strong responses depicted the full range of senses to give descriptions of their surroundings and made effective use of detail to bring the scene to life. For example, “on that day, my neighbourhood fostered a lively atmosphere with vibrant colours and hypnotic sounds...,” “Girls were wearing heavy silky and sumptuous green saris, adorned with shiny golden stones...,” “Mother’s wrists moved gracefully, jingling the colourful glass bangles around them...,” “Devotees chanted rhythmically and harmoniously...,” “the glistening jalebis, the round and plump laddus and the milky cakes were divine and irresistible...,” “At the food corner set up by the inhabitants, I placed a syrupy delicacy on

my tongue and immediately felt a tingling sensation of sweetness. What a yummy treat it was!”

Vocabulary was often noteworthy and included words like “intimidating,” “pressurised,” “congested,” “flabbergasted,” “catalogued,” and “captivating.”

Variety in sentence structure also contributed to consistent descriptions in the essays. One candidate wrote, “As we approached, the elegantly dressed organiser welcomed us with a big smile. Her pearly teeth sparkled!” “The exuberance and playful demeanour of the children as well as the organising skills of the excited adults added to the mesmerising scenery. The day was a huge success!”

Weaker descriptions contained minimal imagery, relying on somewhat vague language or repetition of common words that did not vividly paint a clear picture for the reader. Instead of showing the scene through detailed descriptions, they tended to tell what was happening, missing opportunities to engage the reader’s senses.

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

Example 1

Festive lights hang effortlessly from pole to pole, bringing the festival to life. Giggling children are running around with grilled skewers in hand, their parents not far behind them. The colourful tents distinguish themselves from the dark of the night, creating a joyous atmosphere. This is the spring festival, the most anticipated event of the year!

As spring unveils its wings to welcome a new year in Japan, families and friends visit various temples to face the year waiting ahead. Neighbours wish each other to have a great year while flowers and cherry blossoms bloom with honour to commemorate a new start. As per tradition, a festival is also organised for this event, encouraging people to have fun and leave the agonising past behind while we enter this new chapter of our lives. Each neighbourhood holds their own festivals so that all of Japan can celebrate together. People are dressed in traditional clothing such as kimonos and I feel elated to be able to participate in this symbolic festival. The music is overruled by people's loud chatter and vendors attracting clients to their tents.

These bright tents encourage me to venture around. Delicious food is put on display making me drool in excitement. The area is overwhelmed with families who have arrived from temples and monasteries, and I am trying my best to not bump into laughing children who are wandering around. The ground is already covered with the bright colours of the cherry blossom petals, although they have just started blooming. Many amusing games where prizes can be won are also put on show. Suddenly the tempting scent of food is replaced by a burning smell and loud thump.

Gleaming, enthusiastic eyes glance towards the sky and I hear childish gasps coming from the crowd. I remove my pin from my hair, allowing freedom to wash over me, while I admire the extraordinary beauty of the fireworks. A smile is plastered on my face and a mixed emotion of hope, faith and unexplicable happiness rumbles in my heart. I am ready to conquer this year and leave my fears behind.

Such responses showed effective built-up of atmosphere by close description. The generous use of adjectives such as 'festive,' 'grilled,' 'colourful,' 'enthusiastic' enabled the candidate to paint a clear picture of the scene being described. The range and precision of the vocabulary used by the candidate was excellent: this is a Band One essay. The candidate focuses on what (s)he hears, what (s)he smells and what (s)he sees to describe the neighbourhood. Her/His feelings are expressed with clarity, and it is easy for the examiner to picture the scene. The details mentioned in the introductory paragraph triggers the consistent build-up of atmosphere that continues throughout the essay up to the point when the candidate writes about his/her own feelings and expectations about the coming year. The sentence structures and the correct tense give the essay a natural fluency which is very convincing. Vocabulary is certainly a strong point ('anticipated,' 'bloom,' 'commemorate', 'kimonos,' 'overruled,' 'drool,' 'gleaming.')

The words are used with ease. The images used are relevant and evocative ('hang effortlessly from pole to pole'; 'cherry blossoms bloom with honour'; 'laughing children who are wandering around'; 'I remove my pin from my hair allowing freedom to wash over me') and these earn the candidate credit. Paragraphing is also very good in the way that it divides the material after a good introduction and finishes with a definite and functional final paragraph. Spelling, especially quite a mature vocabulary, is notable with only a few slips 'temselves' and 'unexplicable.'

Example 2

Finally the D-Day had arrived. We had all been impatiently waiting for the big day: the annual music day festival in our neighbourhood.

Early in the morning, while the sun was painting us with golden rays, final multicoloured decorations were being set up. Huge banners bearing 'Music Day 2024' were stretched from wall to wall, string lights and balloons of different sizes and colours were being placed. Colourful musical notes cut-outs were glued to walls giving a helping hand to make this day wonderful.

At noon, everyone was ready and thrilled. We were all dressed up in colourful outfits that screamed our excitement. The bliss on our faces could be seen from a mile away and the atmosphere was enchanting. Temporary food stands could be seen on every corner of the road and my nostrils were loaded with appetizing aromas of oily chips and juicy hamburgers: my mouth was watering already. The musician who was in charge was incredible. Boom! He blasted tunes which made everyone dance in jubilation and harmony. He got everyone in a festive mood. We were all as pumped up. The atmosphere was filled with love, camaraderie and laughter all day long.

Participant after participant were coming on stage for their exciting musical performance. Soon, it was my turn. I was performing a solo. While ascending the high stage, my heart was racing, and I was shaking like a leaf. I had chills, running down my spine while facing the thrilled, yet intimidating crowd but soon a pin-drop silence took over. My performance was a raging success and the ecstatic crowd cheered and whistled for me. Their encouragement enveloped me like a warm embrace.

Music day 2024 created a climax of memories and it was definitely a red-letter day for all the inhabitants. We will cherish this day forever.

In the above response, there is a clear progression from anticipation to the unfolding of the event. The response above employs the full range of senses to give an account of the scene in the neighbourhood on Music Day and made effective use of detail such as 'multicoloured decorations,' 'huge banners,' 'colourful musical note cut-outs,' to bring the scene (s)he was describing to life. The response includes detailed appropriate description of the festival, people, clothes, entertainment, and feelings. Vocabulary is very impressive and includes words like 'enchanting,' 'appetising,' 'jubilation,' 'ecstatic,' 'climax.' Successful use of descriptive techniques such as the simile is noted and credited: 'shaking like a leaf,' 'enveloped me like a warm embrace.' Onomatopoeia is effectively used as in, 'Boom!' Band 1 responses such as the above tend to indicate attempts to use a wider variety of devices. Candidates who can use figurative language to describe a scene vividly and create an atmosphere consistently fare better.

Example 3

It's october which means Halloween. One of the best day in the year, where children are gifted with lot of sweets and can disguise themselves like their favourite heros, movie character, animals and many other creative costumes.

This year the neighbourhood is scarily yet creatively decorated. Pumpkins with devil-like shaped faces are placed along the road with plastified spiders and ugly bugs placed on them, which was a little disgusting.

Children disguised as witches, marvel heros, cows, princesses can be seen running everywhere while screaming. In front of doorsteps, scary figure like ghosts are placed to scare children. Some neighbours even splash fake blood and plastified knives in their garden giving criminals vibe.

Some children even disguise their pets to match or complete their costumes. Plastic packaging's can be seen almost everywhere as the kids throw their packaging of candys on the road. Some neighbours play loud, scary music, screams from movies which give a better scary atmosphere.

This is one of the best Halloween. I enjoyed myself so much with all the free candys with a beautiful handmade costume. The neighbourhood was decorated with lots of details to make children enjoy a good time. There was full of creativity. Although it were scary, the neighbourhood made sure to use safe equipments to not hurt anyone. And everyone respected the costumes of others.

Although the response is relevant and even if clear paragraphing is a merit, the essay suffers from occasional slips. Mistakes when forming plural nouns are noted in 'heros,' 'candys'. Subject-verb agreement is problematic at some points: 'Pumpkins...which was...' 'Although it were scary.' Clumsy use of language is also noted: 'There was full of creativity,' '...made sure to use safe equipments to not hurt anyone.' There is an attempt to list what is seen at some points - heros, movie character, animals,' 'witches, marvel heros, cows, princesses.' The need for detailed description is clearly felt. Although the candidate mentions 'details' and 'creativity,' (s)he does not attempt to give clear descriptions at those points. The essay would certainly have scored higher if the focus had been on description.

It remains in Band 2 as the reader's interest is sustained, but towards the lower end of the band because of the number of slips.

Example 4

Last week it was Diwali and my neighbour decided to do a big party. Everyone in my neighbourhood was invited even those who wasn't Indian. I saw a lot of people coming and his family members were at the party too.

I saw a lot of beautify lamps, lighting, flowers and a lot of beautiful boys and girls in their traditionnal clothes. I was a lot of Indian foods and drinks. Some girls putted flowers on their head as a decoratons and it was so beautiful. I wanted to put some flowers too. So I asked one girl and she did it for me.

There were a lot of Indian music and everyone was dancing. Everyone was enjoying the party and I felt like in another world because it was my first time celebrating diwali with a lot of people. They were all nice and very friendly too. When we sat to eat, we got the famous '7 cari' of my neighbour and a lots of cakes too and really good and tasty.

After eating we did a game and it was so interesting that I still remember it. I made a lot of amazing friends and talked a lot to people from my neighbourhood. The lights was so beautiful that no one wanted to leave not even me. The party finished around 4 a.m in the morning and it was one of the best cultural event I've ever been in my life.

It is imperative that candidates who opt for the descriptive essay achieve a *descriptive* task. Less successful responses such as the above essay show reliance on narrative while writing about their experience during events on the day, rather than describing the scene in the neighbourhood. These candidates overlooked the instruction given, that is to “**describe** “what you see and hear, the atmosphere, the people and what you feel.” The beginning of the essay clearly drives it away from a descriptive approach.

The language in this composition is less specific with some repetition of the determiner a *lot of* - ‘a lot of people,’ ‘a lot of Indian foods,’ ‘a lot of flowers,’ ‘a lot of amazing friends.’ There are, in addition, clear weaknesses in the spelling of very simple vocabulary, even with the simplest words, ‘traditional,’ ‘decoratons.’ . The response lacks control over sentence construction – ‘When we sat to eat, we got the famous ‘7 cari’ of my neighbour and a lots of cakes too and really good and tasty.’

The approach limits the achievement of this essay to Band 4.

Argumentative writing

“Students should be encouraged to have a part-time job during their school holidays.” Do you agree?

This essay on whether students should be encouraged take up a part-time job or not, was within the reach of candidates of all levels. There was a good number of really well-argued essays which clearly detailed the reasons why students should have a part-time job while providing examples to support their arguments. Stronger candidates managed to come

up with a very balanced view on the benefits of part-time jobs and the importance of enjoying one's holidays.

Essays that scored highly were well organised and written with clarity. They provided well-supported arguments that highlighted the positive aspects of taking up a part-time job such as developing a sense of responsibility, financial autonomy, learning to make a home budget, developing a business acumen and helping parents in their expenses.

It is also worth noting that students who did not balance their arguments and took one side of the debate (see Example 1), also scored well as their arguments were well-supported with examples.

However, some candidates struggled with the argumentative essay. In such cases, not much thinking went into the planning of the essay, resulting in a random list of ideas being presented rather than a coherent argument.

Weaker responses presented a list of repetitive ideas, usually rephrasing a single idea and showing little development. Weaker candidates choosing argumentative essays should be encouraged to present only one or two ideas, but in more depth.

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

Example 1

Most people who grew up in the 20th century say that students nowadays should be encouraged to have a part-time job during their school holidays. Here is why I do not fully agree with this statement:

Firstly, modern families have a more stable income compared to the past and with fewer children, means more of the family income can be allocated to each child. Therefore, there is not much need for children to start working as fast as possible.

Secondly, the availability of good-paying part-time jobs to students with no prior academic achievements are rare and usually are already fully staffed. So, most students have to opt for minimum wage jobs which most likely do not offer much long-term benefits.

Lastly, some families are poor and cannot afford to pay for their child's university fees. In that case, the child has no choice but to work a part-time job if he or she wishes to go to the university. This can help them pay for tuition, books and other materials which they may need. Having low income can teach students how to save money and manage their time properly.

In conclusion, I think that students should be encouraged to get a part-time job if they either come from a poor family or if they cannot manage their time and money properly. Else, there is no need to encourage them to get a part-time job. Let them enjoy their holidays.

Example 1 clearly illustrates that a candidate doesn't have to always offer a very balanced essay with arguments for and against to score a Band 1. The above example clearly shows an essay with very valid and well-supported arguments. The candidate makes a statement and clarifies it with examples and explanation. The candidate also introduces another point of view in the last paragraph to add to his/her perspective on the topic. The

language used is very direct and appropriate and there are no mistakes in the candidate's writing. Words like "Firstly" and "secondly" bring in organization to the essay and add to the variety of sentence structures. This is a good example of a Band 1 essay.

Example 2

Nowadays, many students, mainly teenagers opt to work at a part-time job during their school holidays. This decision is quite controversial as it offers a plethora of pros and cons.

Firstly, optimists of the view think that having a part-time job is greatly advantageous to the student. They state that working during the holidays develops a sense of responsibility. By having a part-time job, teenagers get a slight taste of adult life. It is said that people who have worked a part-time job are more experienced this are more prone to job opportunities.

Moreover, in recent years many businesses like stationery shops, clothing stores or even fast-food chains have been employing students to help out in their businesses during school holidays. Through these businesses, the students learn to deal with various types of people, and this is an essential quality to have in life. Working in such businesses even encourage and inspire the youngsters to start their own business. In addition to this, the students receive and spend their own income which often ignites a spark of excitement within them.

On the flipside, pessimists of this view strongly believe that working a part-time job is heinous to the educational development of a student. They state that this deprives the student from focusing fully on their studies as it is extremely difficult to juggle between their job and education. It cannot be denied that some youngsters also misuse their salary received by buying illegal substances or other unhealthy commodities. Naysays also believe that at such a young and tender age, one should have fun and be stress-free during holidays.

In conclusion the points stated above have shed light on the topic being discussed. Now whether you want to have a part-time job is your decision nonetheless.

In the above example, the candidate tackled this title sensibly and offered his/her personal opinions. There are good examples of both the views and a conclusion that remains open. The arguments are presented clearly in a direct and accurate language. Punctuation and organised paragraphs allow a smooth reading of the essay. There is hardly any mistakes except for some inaccuracies in vocabulary like "optimists of the view...part-time job is heinous to the education system...." We also notice that there is a wrong agreement of subject-verb at one point. Over all, this is an effortless piece of writing with a good flow of ideas. Conjunctions and expressions such as 'moreover', 'on the flip side' at the beginning of paragraphs clearly show the transition of ideas from one side to another. Expressions like 'in conclusion' bring out the clarity in organization of ideas. The punctuation and sentence structure would benefit from a little more variation for effect. It is a good example of how an argumentative essay, can gain a Band 1 without using a complex language but by being competent in every aspect.

Example 3

Nowadays, in this generations most students are becoming lazy by just staying at home and on social media. I agree that students should be encouraged to have a part-time job during their school holidays.

At first I was knocked on my heels when I first heard that but with time I understood the

This essay has brief mention of arguments without too much elaboration hence, is more like a list of arguments. Many ideas, such as students become lazy by staying at home is repeated. The language in the essay is quite simple, entails multiple errors and the vocabulary is far from ambitious. There are even instances when the writing takes on traits of a narrative essay, “ At first I was knocked on my heels when I first heard that but with time I understood the concept why.” There are many agreement mistakes, plural forms are frequently wrongly used and there are even some irrelevant ideas such as: “As youngsters loves to hang out frequently with their friends and like party, driving at a dangerous speed, it may lead to an accident.” The content remains elementary creating poor interest for the reader. This essay is therefore at the bottom of Band 3.

Example 4

All students should be encouraged to have a part-time job holidays. Like myself I'm gonna find a job in a super market in a base of a salary. Because I need a ps5 but my dad and mom don't have a good income. So I'm gonna find a job. Like all students need to know to get money is too hard. They need to know how there perants work hard for

Weaker candidates wrote essays such as the above, featuring limited undeveloped ideas, with confused tenses, simple sentences , colloquial language and inaccurate vocabulary. Many spelling mistakes such as “perants” , “super market” were also noted. The frequent errors make it difficult for the reader to follow the sequence of events. The poor relevance due to limited writing, poor sentence structures and inaccurate vocabulary drive this essay to Band 5.

Narrative Writing

Write a story based on the following line: "I was very happy that I had made this decision."

The narrative task was as usual the most popular option with candidates. Candidates had to write a story based on the line 'I was very happy that I had made this decision...' The best responses conveyed elaborate plots, making use of very accurate G/S/P as well as wide and precise vocabulary. A variety of sentence types was used to sustain the reader's interest all through and learners displayed interesting narrative techniques. Weaker students, however, found it challenging to develop a plot and used very flawed language throughout. Incorrect spelling and tenses and sentence separation difficulties were essentially apparent in these scripts. The following candidate responses exemplify examiners' expectations in narrative essays.

Example 1

Beads of sweat trickled down my forehead as I walked down the street. "I'll have to face the music," I muttered to myself. That day, I had decided to expose all the misdeeds of the school bully, Jake. Despite the fact that I was very happy that I had made this decision, I could feel my hair standing on its end because I knew that Jake wasn't someone who would let go of grudges.

Sticking these thoughts out of my head, I started striding down the streets as I had the unsettling feeling of being watched. Out of the blue, the street lights started flickering and went off. This sudden movement made me drop my phone. I crouched down and groped around in the dark, cold, moonless night, hardly able to see the outline of my own hand. A hush had fallen upon the stranded street.

Suddenly, the silence was broken by the shuffling of footsteps. Mustering my courage, I looked up and realisation hit me like a twenty pounds sledge hammer. What I saw made my jaw fall slack. It was Jake! Fear overwhelmed my entire being and a wave of anxiety washed over me.

"So you are the one who is going to expose me," Jake said in a condescending tone. "So?" I challenged him as my face creased with anxiety. I tried to remain composed despite the erratic pounding of my heart. His face twisted with annoyance and eyes narrowed with contempt. He took a step closer.

From a peripheral peek, I caught sight of a familiar figure approaching. A spark of hope ignited my heart as the person was none other than my dad. Horror-struck, Jake took to his heels as my dad was a well-built man. I heaved a sigh of relief and clinging to the latter, we went home safe and sound.

The very next day, I met up with the headmaster and complained about Jake. He was severely scolded and got a letter of transfer. He hung his head low and dragged his feet out of the school. Upon hearing this news, a tidal wave of euphoria surged through me, lifting me to the

This is undeniably a Band 1 essay. The content is complex and elaborate and the language is predominantly very precise throughout. Expressions denoting feelings have been used consistently for particular effects. The vocabulary used is remarkable (I had decided to expose all the misdeeds of the school bully, Sticking these thoughts out of my

head, I started striding down the streets as I had the unsettling feeling of being watched, the silence was broken by the shuffling of footsteps, Jake said in a condescending tone ,etc.). The writing is expressive and engaging and the reader's interest is sustained throughout.

Example 2

Ominous dark cloud covered the sky. After a few minute, it started to rain heavily.

I had to go to work but due to my instinct, I decided not to go. I took a day off. So I sat down on the couch and started to watch the news on the tv of what is happening outside.

Suddenly, something caught my attention, it was a place where I usually parked my car. It was a place where there was no drains. Water started to accumulate. It started to cause flooding. I saw that all the car was going everywhere, hitting houses and collide to each other.

I was very happy that I had made this decision. If I did not take that decision, my car would also go there and I had to pay for reparation for my car or in the worst case scenario, I had to buy another one. That incident last for one day only. There was no death but there was damaged vehicle and houses.

This narrative essay is relevant but the content is very simple. The essay generates some interest for the reader but the use of punctuation is faulty throughout and we observe that errors occur when complexity is attempted. The language in the essay is quite simple and the vocabulary is far from ambitious. There is not much elaboration and we feel that it is mostly a series of events without any effect. This essay is therefore at the bottom of band 3.

Example 3

I was very happy that I go to the church. I had made this decisions to accepted Jesus I have 2 years old and I am so Happy because Despite I accepted Jesus my life was change Today I am a corale in church Tabernacle the real mission of life My church is a places very joyful I feel me very happy and courage My life was change depuis ca desole j'ai pas pu terminer mais merci

Put your Trust on Jesus!

Even though meaning is not in doubt in this response, language errors are too recurrent. The essay is not meaningless but there are numerous serious mistakes which blur the meaning. The sentences are generally simple and the vocabulary comprises of lots of imprecisions. The storyline is sketchy and the happenings appear to be haphazard. Errors are frequent– from punctuation, sentence separation to spelling mistakes. Subsequently, the serious language errors and inaccuracies in vocabulary limit the achievement of this essay to Band 5.

Question No. 10 – Literature

As in previous years, a choice between poetry and prose was set. The poetry question was based on Emily Dickinson's *Hope* and was a popular choice with the candidates. The

prose question was based on an extract of E.M Forster's *The Machine Stops*. Candidates were required to identify common literary devices and to comment on the functions of these devices. Candidates had to show an understanding of figurative language and show their ability to analyse a literary extract.

Option A – Poetry

In this component, candidates were assessed on their ability to appreciate a poem and demonstrate analytical skills. Candidates were also required to show awareness of the message, make links between text and life experiences, analyse character, plot, themes and the use and effect of stylistic devices.

On the whole, candidates did well on the tasks asking them to identify the narrative voice literary devices and rhyming words. Questions requiring candidates to explain selected lines from the poem were generally well attempted. 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 only a small number of candidates.

Item 1(a): Generally, well answered. Candidates had little difficulty identifying the narrative voice which was the first-person narrative.

Item 1(b): Most candidates correctly identified that the evidence for the first- person narrative was any quote including “I” or “my”.

For example: “I’ve heard it in the chilliest land....” / “it asked a crumb of me”

Item 2: This item also was generally well attempted. Candidates could easily identify the rhyming words “Heard and bird”.

Item 3(a): This item required candidates to recognise an example of metaphor. A good number of candidates managed to recognise that “Hope is the thing with feathers” was the correct answer.

Item 3(b): Although candidates could identify the metaphor many could not comment on the effect of using a metaphor. Candidates could refer to the following key ideas:

- To draw a comparison (Between hope and a bird)
- To beautify the language.

Items 4(a) and 4(b): This item required explanations or direct paraphrasing of the given lines.

4(a) “And sore must be the storm

That could abash the little bird..."

Many candidates managed to display an understanding of the lines and address the key ideas that it would be impossible to kill hope or Hope never dies. However, some candidates explained only one part of the question.

4(b) "Yet, never, in extremity, It asked a crumb of me,"

Candidates struggled in this part of the question and had difficulty in demonstrating understanding of the given lines. Credit was given to candidates who managed to explain that despite adverse situations, hope never required anything from anyone.

Item 5: This item asked candidates to comment on their own understanding of the main message and offer a personal interpretation. Responses that showed understanding of the poem, provided evidence of analysis, were insightful and well supported with close reference to the poem earned 3 marks.

Possible interpretations of this poem are:

- Hope
- Hope being permanent / resilient / everywhere / free

A few samples to illustrate the range of answers obtained this year are given below.

Example 1

This poem is about how hope is such a little but powerful emotion. "And never stops at all": hope is never truly lost as even in the harshest times; its light keeps us warm. "I've heard it in the chilliest land, and on the strangest seas." No matter what one goes through, hope will always be there to recomfort you and still ask nothing in return. Hope is what keeps you going when you hit rock- bottom. This poem is really about hope, in its many forms, took such a symbolic shape for the author and how it's light changed through time.

This piece of work scores 3 marks as the candidate shows a clear understanding of the poem. There is evidence of analysis that allows the candidate to give an insightful response and the answer is well supported with close reference to the poem.

Example 2

The poem talks about hope, and how it is something perched in people's soul. It sings a never-ending tune without words. Its sweet tune can be heard even in strong winds. While hope keeps people warm, the jealous hurt it. Hope persists even in the hardest times, never asking anything in return.

This sample shows some evidence of understanding and provides some support from the poem. The candidate recognises the key ideas of the poem related to hope but there is not enough analysis for this to get full marks.

Example 3

That we need to keep hope even when we face something hard in life because at the end it will always be good. Everything we been through will get paid.

In this response, the candidate shows a very sketchy and offers only a literal understanding of the poem. There is no attempt at going beyond a literal meaning of the poem and this response was awarded 1 mark.

Example 4

It's about the storm and how it can affect the environment and the habitat of animals. Way it destroys the habitats of animals leaving them without shelter.

This response shows no understanding of the poem and is insufficient to meet the criteria for 1 mark.

Option B – Prose

The prose extract was adapted from ‘The Machine Stops’ by E.M Forster (1909).

Candidates were assessed on their ability to identify specific literary devices in MCQs and their effects in explicit questions. They were tested on their understanding of some parts of the extract, and their opinion on the relationship between Kuno and his mother Vashti.

Generally, candidates were successful in identifying the literary devices but some did not explain the effects.

Questions requiring explanation of parts of the extract were generally well answered.

The last question, asking for a personal interpretation and analysis of the relationship between the main characters and supported by close reference, was well attempted by a vast majority of candidates.

Items 1 (a) and 1 (b):

1(a) Candidates were asked to recognize the narrative voice used in the extract.

Answer: Third person narrative

1(b) Candidates faced some difficulty identifying the narrative voice used and providing the piece of evidence (**she/he** or for instance...**she** pressed a button and **her** chair.) from the extract proved to be problematic in some cases.

Items 2 (a) and 2 (b):

This item assessed knowledge of the literary device- simile and the effect of using it.

2(a) Generally well answered by candidates.

Answer: With a face **as** white **as** a fungus

2(b) Most candidates were able to make an explicit comparison between the face of Vashti and a Fungus and correctly pointed out the effect of using a simile through the use of ‘like’ or ‘as’.

Item 3: This item directly addresses the words in the question, which are designed to elicit responses and understanding of the following lines. Candidates had to look for **explanations** or **direct paraphrasing** of the given lines.

3(a) *“Her voice was irritable, for she had been interrupted often.”*

Candidates did not have any difficulty explaining that Vashti was **annoyed** as she had been **disturbed many times** by her son.

3(b) *“The Machine is much, but it is not everything”.*

The key idea here is that the machine is important but it is not the most important thing.

While a good number of candidates answered correctly, some had trouble in understanding the line and wrongly interpreted the quote.

3(c) *“I hear something like you through this telephone, but I do not hear you”*

Candidates fared well on this item and explained that the son can hear the voice of the mother through the telephone but cannot connect with her on a personal level.

Weak responses however, demonstrated a poor level of understanding and candidates were unsuccessful in providing the correct interpretations.

Item 4:

This item required candidates to explore the skills they will need to demonstrate in more detail analysing prose and developing a personal response. Focus here was on the relationship between Kuno and his mother and candidates had to provide an informed opinion and also give a well-supported answer on the type of relationship they share.

Relevant ideas include:

- A distant / one-sided / complex / complicated relationship
- Not affectionate
- An unhappy relationship

However, ideas were not limited to the above only. Correct and meaningful alternative interpretations were also awarded marks.

It should also be noted that candidates were penalised if response talked only of love of Vashti for Kuno. In this case, a maximum of 1 mark was awarded irrespective of the level of development of the answer or textual references.

Candidates were awarded full marks if responses went beyond the text's surface meaning to look for underlying ideas and demonstrated detailed knowledge through reference to specific quotations from the extract.

Find below few samples of candidates responses and critical engagement in describing the relationship between Kuno and his mother.

Sample 1

Kuno's relationship with his mother could be described as a long distance relationship as they stay very far from each other. "It took kuno who lived on the other side of the earth..."

It can be stated that Vashti loves to speak to Kuno through the machine as her annoyance transformed into joy when Kuno called her "her white face wrinkled into smiles.." However, when they talked, it was only during a certain period of time that had to be strictly followed and Kuno's mother would get irritated if he delayed, "I can only give fully five minutes Kuno.."Kuno also yearns to see his mother in person as talking through the machine is not enough for him. This shows that their relationship is perishing into the abyss as they both are in discord. The mother who prefers isolation and loneliness, and the son who needs his mother's presence, who needs to see her and hear more of her, "I want you to come and see me."

This response gives an accurate description of their relationship and shows full understanding of the extract. There is evidence of analysis that allows the candidate to

give an insightful response. The answer is also well supported with relevant textual references. The candidate scores 3 marks.

Sample 2

Kuno loves his mother so much that he does not want to talk to her through a machine and wants to meet her. But they have a distant relationship as Kuno lives on the other side of the earth. But when sometimes Kuno called his mother, she is always busy and isolated.

The above response shows some understanding of the extract and some evidence of analysis. There are however, no references to the extract as such to support arguments. This is an example of a weaker response.

Sample 3

Kuno's mother is obsessed with the machine. Kuno wants to meet his mother to catch up but she prefers to talk through the machine. There is not much conversation between Kuno and his mother.

This answer scored 1 mark since response shows only a literal understanding of the extract and there is no evidence of analysis.

Sample 4

Kuno's relationship with his mother is full of love. This extract shows how close they are together and how much they love each other. They have a caring and beautiful mother and son relationship. Their tiredness flew away when they heard each other's voices. They have a kind and joyful relationship despite not seeing each other often.

This answer is irrelevant and hence insufficient to even meet the 1mark criteria since there is no understanding of the extract.