

Chief Examiner's Report

The pass mark for this paper was 28 marks out of 50.

Specific Questions

Part A

Candidates and tutors should remember that, in Part A, the following two assessment criteria are being tested:

- identifying accurately, and compare the lines of reasoning and main points from the documents and
- synthesising the key information in a way that is relevant to the purpose

Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not marked in this section of the paper but there are marks given for synthesis and the use of the candidate's own words. Parts of the questions asking the candidate to 'identify significant problems', 'identify causes' or 'identify meaning (in images)', concentrate on the skills of extraction and selection. Parts of questions requiring the candidate to 'consider to what extent', 'assess the extent to which' and 'to what extent do writers agree', all presume an ability to synthesise the information presented in the documents and to comment on both text and images including graphical information, where used. Candidates need to remember to read the questions carefully and to refer to all of the documents required by the question. In Part A it is usually most effective if the candidate names the documents used in answering a particular question or parts of a question. Too often, only one of the required documents has been used to generate an answer or the second part of the question has been overlooked.

Question 1

This question asked the candidate to use the research findings in Documents 2 and 3 to identify three significant problems that teenagers may currently face. There were 4 marks available for this answer.

Most candidates were able to gain a good mark for this answer. Marks lost were where a candidate had used only one of the documents named to supply the information. In preparing candidates for the test it should be remembered that the questions, or parts of questions, requiring candidates to 'identify' require only the naming of the relevant points. Some candidates spent a long time explaining the problems. Although they were not directly penalised for this they lost time and very often did not complete the paper.

Question 2

This question required the candidate to use Documents 2 to identify three causes of the problems teenagers are experiencing. They were then asked to assess the extent to which the writers of Documents 1 and 2 agree about the reasons that young people feel under pressure. There were 8 marks available for this answer.

In some cases the answer was quite well done. The weaker candidates could not differentiate 'problems' from 'causes of problems'. Synthesis was somewhat weak. Most candidates mentioned both documents but were unable to explain the extent of agreement. Another common error was that a candidate would mention a cause or perhaps two causes, go on to how much writers agreed on the causes then forget to return to the final of the three causes asked for.

Question 3

The candidate was asked to identify the meaning of the images in Document 1 and 2 and assess the extent each supports the arguments in the related documents. 6 marks were available for the answer.

This question gave rise to a great variety of answers. It was pleasing to note that examiners commented that candidates are learning to comment on the meaning rather than just describe the image. That said, the image in Document 1 elicited a variety of interpretations. Some thought the character was on drugs and therefore felt different. A handful read 'Austin' as 'Autism' and went on to expand on that theme. The irony of the teenager's happiness causing stress about being different was appreciated only by a few. In contrast, many recognised the stereotypical portrayal of 'youth' in the second document. On the whole linkage to the documents was only brief and superficial. Just saying it agrees with the document without any justification gains very little credit.

Question 4

Using information from both Document 1 and Document 3 the candidate was asked to identify three possible ways to reduce the pressure felt by teenagers and to consider the extent to which each would be effective. 7 marks were available for the answer.

Most candidates were able to suggest ways to reduce pressure, although many were not from the source documents and therefore did not gain marks. There were many heartfelt cries for better parent understanding but little mention of the extent to which different ways would be effective.

Part B

In Part B candidates are given marks for:

- using a format and style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose
- organising the relevant information from all three documents clearly and coherently
- using own words where appropriate and
- writing legibly using accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar

Question 5

The question asked the candidate to write an article based on the information in the documents, for the magazine of their local health centre looking at

- the range of problems experienced by teenagers
- factors that do and do not cause anxiety
- practical ways in which parents, schools and the health services could help teenagers through adolescence

25 marks are available for this answer.

3.3.1 3 marks are allocated for this section. To obtain the mark for the form of an article the candidate must have a minimum of a heading. Examiners reported that up to fifty percent of candidates in some centres had no heading and thus lost this mark. Some candidates spent a lot of time writing in columns and drawing pictures. These are not requirements for an article but some structuring to add clarity to the text is. Paragraphing and subheadings are good examples. More candidates lost a mark for 'tone' than usually. This was mainly because they kept indiscriminately changing 'audience', sometimes addressing the article to teenagers and at other times to parents without any meaningful divisions. Candidates who referred to 'Document 1', 'Document 2', without any reference to what these were, were penalised under tone, as readers would have had no means of knowing what these were, so the article would not be fit for purpose.

3.3.2 In total there were 13 marks awarded for this section covering both the process of writing and the content.

Some candidates gained good marks for the use of their own words in an effective manner. There was less blatant direct extraction from the text sources than is often the case, possibly because this was a subject about which many candidates obviously had some knowledge. Quotations can be useful but must be used judiciously as illustrations to back up salient points made in the candidate's own words.

The range of teenage problems was generally covered, though some simply listed them under bullet points without any expansion or comment. Very few had read the brief carefully enough to cover the factors that do and do not cause anxiety and depression. Often suggestions for ways to help teenagers were from candidates own personal experience (eg 'at our school we have' or 'my parent ...' rather than, as requires by the question, from the sources provided.

In the organisation of material the best marks were gained by candidates who used the structure provided in the task set but added an appropriate introduction and conclusion. In addition, logical sequencing within sections is required together with linkage between one part of the article and another. Overall there also needs to be a balance of coverage. Candidates used a variety of article models but many perhaps understandably mirrored teenage magazines.

3.3.3 Finally, 9 of the 25 marks for this question are awarded for accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar. At level 3, good use of complex sentences is required. To gain good marks, the piece of writing must be of an appropriate length, be of almost faultless accuracy and successfully synthesise the information required. Many articles were extremely short and some were composed entirely of bullet pointed facts. This gives little scope to award marks for synthesis. Few candidates were awarded above the lowest band for accuracy. There continues to be a number of basic spelling errors and even errors in words presented in the question paper and documents (especially 'graffiti' and 'adolescence'). Papers with copying errors do not demonstrate a Level 3 capability.

General comments

On the whole examiners reported that the scripts marked were of a better quality than usual perhaps because of the natural interest factor of the paper. It was felt, also, that there were certainly signs that some centres were putting a great deal of effort into preparing candidates and this was having an effect.

There were fewer 'howlers' in these answers perhaps because the writers had had personal experience of most issues and understood them only too well. Some candidate, however, showed wisdom beyond their years:

'Parents know a lot more than teenagers – talking things through with them is a help. It's like counselling but cheaper.'

'Parents are only good for one thing – financial support.'

'it may lead to pregnancy which is another headache that may bring on a feeling of anxiety'

One candidate ended the article with the following exhortation to parents:

Relax
Remove pressure
Have patience
Ask questions
Show you are there for them
Love
Love
Love

Finally, the Chief Examiner would like to stress that the time allowed for the level 3 Communication paper (except where special allowances have been applied for and agreed) is one hour and thirty minutes. This includes the time required to read the source material and to proof read and check the answers. Centres are liable to be audited on this issue and all matters of examination administration.

For the first time an examiner has reported that some scripts were completed in pencil. This is not acceptable except in the case of candidates seeking special consideration, which must be applied for and agreed.

Examiners are also finding scripts where candidates have used different names or candidate numbers to those on the accompanying ICM. Where this is the case there is a danger that incorrect marks will be entered.

A number of examiners have commented that parcels of scripts are arriving with very poor packing. Some have had to be repackaged by the Post Office. Centres are reminded that they are responsible for the security of papers, which includes postal arrangements. Some centres are sending large numbers of scripts out of order. Centres are reminded that the order of the scripts should match that of names on the accompanying ICMs. Finally, it should be noted that abusive or suspect scripts are returned to the awarding body for action to be taken.

C M Welch
Chief Examiner – Communication.
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