

3850 International English June 2015 Chief Examiner's Report

Section 1 General Comments

The assessment covers Reading and Writing. Marks are divided equally and candidates need to complete both in order to gain a pass. At all stages candidates performed better on the Reading sections than on the Writing sections. Generally the Reading section was completed but some candidates either did not attempt the Writing or wrote very few words. Time management may be an issue for some candidates.

The majority of candidates seemed to engage with the source documents and were able to use these to inform their writing task. However, some candidates had been entered before their skills were sufficiently developed or were entered at an inappropriate stage.

Section 2 Performance relating to specific assessment criteria – Reading

Generally candidates understood the source documents and at all stages most of the reading questions were answered correctly.

Stage 1 Reading

Arranging words in alphabetical order posed problems for some candidates because of the requirement to use first and second place letters to sequence the words correctly.

Candidates were asked for a dictionary definition of a given word from the alphabetical list, many candidates chose to define a different word from the list instead of the word asked for.

In completing the form marks are awarded for Reading and Writing and for following instructions. Many candidates did not complete personal details correctly, title was frequently missing and although most used some capital letters, their use was not consistent. Some learners wrote one compound sentence rather than two sentences required and some candidates did not write in complete sentences.

Candidates found identifying errors of capitalisation and end of sentence punctuation challenging. Few learners achieved full marks although many achieved some of the marks. Some chose to re-order the sentences and some to rewrite in them in their own words. Others did not attempt this question.

Many candidates had difficulty identifying and correcting the three spelling errors.

Stage 2 Reading

Reading for detail and extracting the relevant information was an issue for some candidates.

Candidates had difficulty with features of layout and were unable to give reasons for the use of images and use of bullet points in the document.

Some candidates avoided answering multiple choice questions.

<p>Stage 3 Reading</p>	<p>Identifying the key points was challenging for many candidates. Some copied out whole sections of the text. Some did not respond at all to this task. Some did not read the rubric and follow the instruction to use 'document 1' and included key points from all three documents.</p> <p>Candidates did not understand the terminology 'organisational features' as meaning the layout of the document and named four 'organisations' rather than organisational features.</p> <p>Finding synonyms proved to be difficult. Many candidates did not respond to this task. A minority named the antonym rather than the synonym. Those who were able to attempt the question generally only scored one mark of the three available.</p> <p>Candidate performance on identifying and correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar errors varied. Many identified the spelling and grammar errors but were not all able to correct them. Only a few identified the punctuation errors and even fewer were able to recognise errors in the use of commas and apostrophes.</p>
<p>Section 3 Performance relating to specific assessment criteria – Writing</p> <p>Candidate performance on the writing task varied from no response to well written text. At all three stages some candidates did not attempt the writing task or wrote very few words. In many instances candidates just copied whole sections from the source documents. Some candidates produced well written text and the quality of some of the writing was reflected in the achievement of merits and distinctions.</p>	
<p>Planning and organising.</p>	<p>Candidates should be able to plan and organise their writing. Many candidates across all three stages did not plan their writing or organise their writing into paragraphs thus losing valuable marks which could have made the difference between a pass and a fail. Planning was often a repeat of the bullet points with no expansion or additional detail.</p>
<p>Length and detail</p>	<p>Although the word counts are only an indication, it is important that candidates write at sufficient length to demonstrate the skills at the appropriate stage and to produce a piece of text in a given format.</p> <p>Candidates should expand on the bullet points given in the rubric and can use information from the source documents, but this must be written in their own words. Marks cannot be awarded for directly copying pieces of text from the source documents.</p> <p>At Stage 1 some candidates ignored the rubric and wrote on a different topic.</p> <p>At Stage 2 many of the candidates just copied from the source documents and did not link the information.</p> <p>At Stage 3 most candidates scored well on using the information from the source document but only a minority put this in their 'own words'.</p>

Format and structure	<p>The correct structuring and formatting of documents is important. At all three stages many candidates lost marks for this.</p> <p>Stage 1 candidates generally did not have a title/heading and candidates did not write in paragraphs.</p> <p>At Stage 2 very few candidates put a title. Some candidates had an introduction, middle and ending but often they just copied material from source documents. Those that planned their writing and used the bullet points in the rubric had more structure to their writing.</p> <p>At Stage 3 most candidates were able to either attempt an address or opening but did not have an appropriate close, as they did not complete the task. A wide range of opening and closing styles was accepted across cultural and linguistic variety.</p>
Language – style, tone and vocabulary	<p>Across all stages, the tone was generally appropriate but expression was frequently clumsy particularly when text was copied from the source documents but not linked. The range of vocabulary, when used in the candidates own words, was quite good.</p>
Logical sequence	<p>If candidates followed the bullet points writing was sequenced logically. Where candidates copied from the source documents, there was a some attempt at sequencing.</p>
Sentence structure	<p>Sentence structure at Stage1 was generally acceptable.</p> <p>At Stage 2 candidates often wrote very long sentences and did not demonstrate use of simple and compound sentences.</p> <p>At stage 3 some candidates attempted complex sentences in their writing but with varying degrees of success.</p>
Punctuation	<p>At all stages some candidates performed well. At Stages 1 and 2 the lack of use of capitals for proper nouns and inappropriate use of capitals in other parts of the text meant lower marks for punctuation. End of sentence punctuation was in the main appropriate.</p> <p>At Stage 2 use of full stops, commas and capitalisation was generally good. However, many candidates wrote very long sentences using conjunctions rather than commas or full stops where appropriate.</p>
Grammar	<p>Across all levels grammar was poor with similar common errors. These included frequent use of ‘s’ at the end of words; incorrect subject verb agreement and use of tenses; omission of subject pronouns; omission of articles, omission of ‘d’ for past simple e.g. ‘use to’ for ‘used to’. However, at Stage 3 higher-level candidates did attempted relative clauses and conditional sentences.</p>
Spelling	<p>Spelling was good at all stages. Many candidates performed far beyond the level expected and many achieved full marks.</p>

Proof reading	Candidates must confirm that they have proof read their writing. Many wrote less than one page and did not read to the end of the question paper thus missing the check box to confirm they had checked their writing. As a consequence a mark was lost, which may have made the difference between a pass and a fail.
Legibility	Candidates were asked to confirm that they had checked that their writing was legible. Again, because many wrote less than one page, they did not read to the end of the question paper thus missing the check box, and lost a mark.
<p>Section 4 Areas of good performance</p> <p>Those candidates who achieved sufficient marks to pass typically wrote at sufficient length and demonstrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accurate spelling • good use of language • correct formatting and structuring of documents • the ability to include and expand upon the relevant detail required. 	
<p>Section 5 Areas for development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marks are awarded for planning writing. Candidates must be encouraged to make use of the spaces provided for this. 2. All candidates could achieve significant marks by including and expanding upon all the relevant detail listed in the bullet points in the question brief. 3. Candidates should be secure in their knowledge of grammar and use of punctuation at the appropriate stage before being entered into the exam. Correct grammar and punctuation are required irrespective of the type of document being written. 4. Appropriate structuring and formatting of documents is important. Candidates need to be familiar with different types of documents and how to produce them. 5. Proof-reading of documents would help many candidates achieve higher marks and this could make the difference between a pass and a fail. 	
<p>Section 6 Recommendations and advice for centres</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation of candidates is essential. Candidates should be given the opportunity to complete practice papers or centre-devised exercises that replicate the demands of the live examination materials. 2. Teachers should be familiar with the demands of all three stages as all lower stages are subsumed into the stage above. It is important that candidates are entered at the stage appropriate to their level of skills. 3. Candidates should be encouraged to read the whole question paper so that they do not miss parts of questions or instructions. 5. Effective time management is crucial. Candidates cannot achieve a pass if they do not attempt the writing section of the question paper. 	