



3850 Certificate in English

Chief Examiner's Report

August 2021

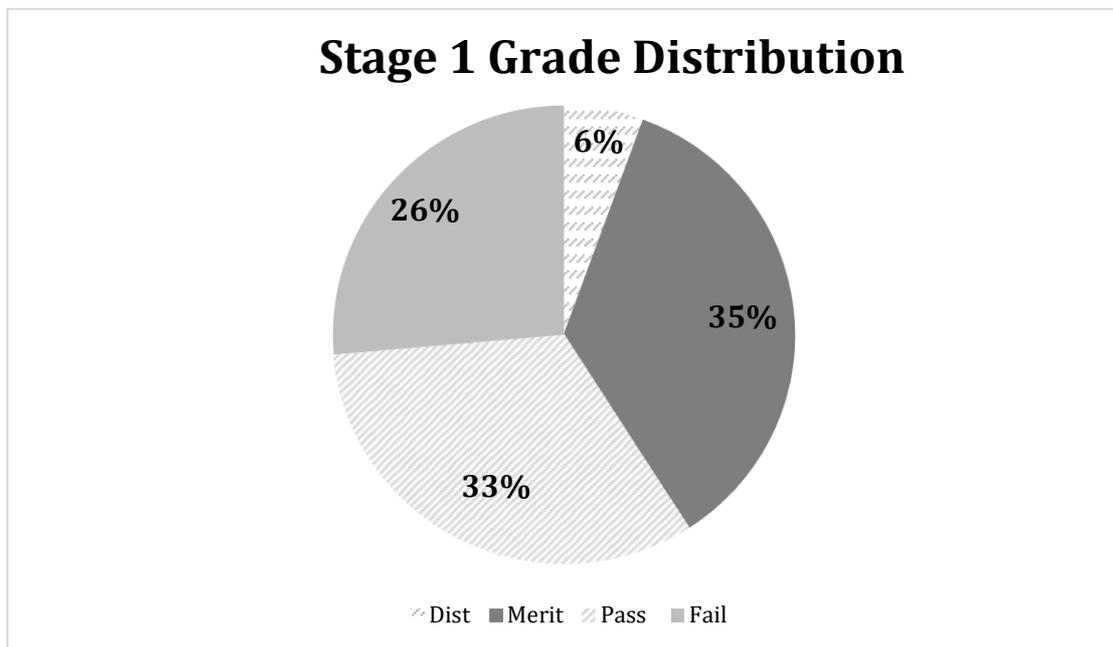
**3850 Certificate in English
Chief Examiner's Report – August 2021 Series**

**Stages 1-3
Section 1**

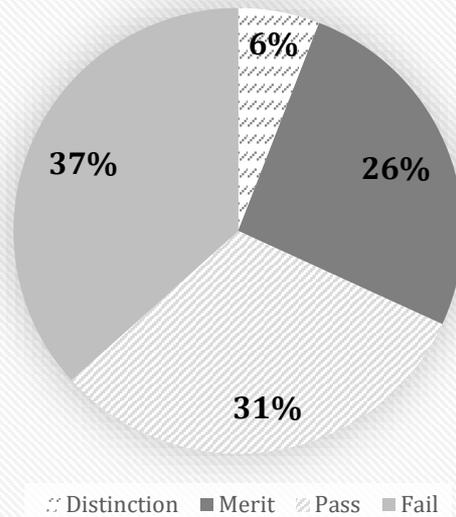
General Comments

Grade Distribution

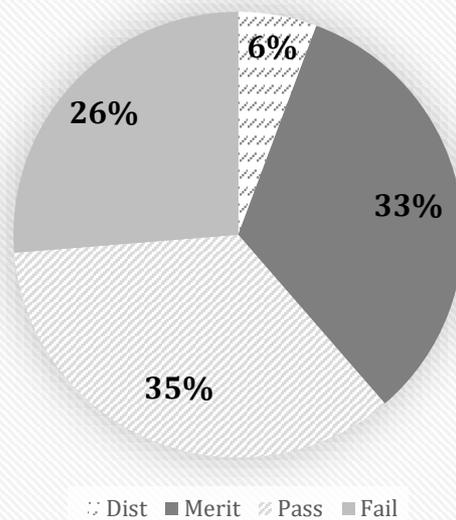
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Number of Candidates	1205	5271	5393
Distinction	67	309	305
Merit	426	1371	1781
Pass	394	1657	1889
Fail	318	1934	1418



Stage 2 Grade Distribution



Stage 3 Grade Distribution



The assessment covers Reading and Writing.

Generally, candidates performed better on the Reading section than the Writing section. It is important to note that while most passed on the Reading with some Writing marks, a number achieved more marks in the Writing section.

Across the stages and based on performance in previous series, the number of candidates achieving a distinction was, as expected, at 6% for each stage. However, the number of candidates who achieved at least a pass declined this year, which was possibly a consequence of the disruption caused by Covid. There was an improvement on the 2018 achievement rates at each stage, but a slight fall at Stage 1 in comparison to 2019 and a greater decline at Stage 2 and Stage 3. This sustained improvement on the 2018 achievement rate is encouraging to see, as it demonstrates that some of the gains made between 2018 and 2019 have been maintained.

It was noted at Stage 2 and Stage 3, that whilst most candidates made an attempt at the Writing, the texts were often very short, which was reflected in the marks awarded. However, at both of these stages, there were a significant number of merits and this was, in the main, as a result of improved performance in the Reading section.

The age range of the groups was more reflective of 2019 than 2020, which is evident in the results. Most candidates had been entered at an appropriate level, although some Stage 3 candidates demonstrated lower level learning and might have benefitted from being entered at Stage 2.

Section 2 Performance relating to specific assessment criteria – Reading

The candidates demonstrated an understanding of and engaged with the source documents. There was little or no evidence of candidates becoming confused as to which source document to refer to when answering the questions.

There were only a few candidates that copied out sentences or paragraphs in answer to questions that required one word or short answers. It should continue to be stressed to candidates that they should only do what is required by the question, so that they do not waste time.

There was a marked improvement in understanding the purpose of the text at Stages 1 and 3 and at Stage 2 and Stage 3 more candidates were able to identify layout features. However, it should be noted that there was evidence of candidates giving examples of a layout feature by writing out the whole title or subheading rather than giving the name of the feature eg. 'title' or 'subheading'. Only the name attracts marks. As in previous years, some candidates suggested that spelling, punctuation and grammar were layout features, so did not gain any marks. Other candidates gave answers that did not relate to the source document in question.

The punctuation and grammar questions in the Reading section are still proving difficult for a number of candidates who do not read the question carefully and who often, for example, insert random punctuation. Candidates need to be aware of the punctuation required for the level.

Candidates need to be reminded that the number of marks allocated to a question are on the question paper. Some only give one or two answers for a three mark question. Candidates are not penalised for writing one, two or three answers on the same line, but they must be made aware of the mark allocation per question.

Candidates should also be aware that all answers are to be found in the source documents and do not require them to draw on own experience or prior knowledge.

Stage 1 Reading

The majority of the candidates were able to answer most questions, apart from the layout features and finding the spelling errors in the first and last paragraph.

Most candidates achieved the full three marks for the form, however fewer candidates achieved the marks for circling an instruction and signing their name after proofreading the sentence on the form than in previous years. Candidates need to be aware they are circling an instruction, not the heading. The sentence on the form continues to be challenging each year and candidates continue to struggle, especially with end of sentence punctuation.

	<p>There was a significant improvement in candidates understanding the purpose of the text and the main point, but it is still important that teaching and learning takes place around the different formats of text and the language that each uses.</p> <p>Candidates found it difficult to relate an image to print and often did not select an answer in context with the text. Candidates were required to select a caption from a multiple-choice rubric in this series, but it is still important that they relate the image to the source document and do not draw on their own experience.</p> <p>There was a noticeable number of candidates who found it difficult to locate information or read in detail. Candidates need to read questions carefully and locate the specific information in the text rather than scanning the text and picking out individual words or phrases that they believe to be correct.</p> <p>The dictionary question continues to be an issue for some candidates, who attempt to give definitions in their own words.</p> <p>Year on year there has been an improvement in reading and understanding different types of words.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Reading</p>	<p>Candidates continue to find it challenging to identify the purpose of a text and only a quarter were able to select the correct answer in this multiple-choice question. Candidates need to be aware of the type of language used in a document to identify the purpose.</p> <p>More candidates attempted the organisational features question but only half achieved at least one of the three marks. As mentioned in section 2, candidates need to be aware of how this question should be answered and the range of options, potentially available to them, on a source document.</p> <p>A graph was introduced as an image in the last series and was used again in this series. This question has continued to be managed well by candidates.</p> <p>A high percentage of candidates were able to gain two of the three marks for main points. More detailed reading may aid candidates in achieving the three marks.</p> <p>Overall, candidates were able to locate information for the majority of the questions but focusing teaching and learning in respect of scanning for information or detailed reading may be of benefit here.</p> <p>The majority of candidates were able to select the correct grammatical options but punctuation continues to be a challenge, especially the use of a question mark. Candidates need to be aware that at this level the use of commas and apostrophes is not expected.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Reading</p>	<p>There continues to be an improvement at this level in the number of candidates who correctly identify the purpose of the source document.</p>

	<p>A significant number of candidates attempted to name the organisational features with over half achieving at least two of the three marks, which is a great improvement in their performance for this question. However, teaching and learning on how to answer this question needs to continue for even greater success.</p> <p>Around half of the candidates achieved at least one or two of the three marks for identifying the main points. More detailed reading may aid candidates in achieving the three marks.</p> <p>The introduction of a graph as an image in the last series was continued in this series and was managed well by candidates.</p> <p>There continues to be an improvement in the number of candidates who are able to recognise a synonym and provide dictionary definitions. Over half of the candidates achieved the full three marks for dictionary definitions.</p> <p>Overall, candidates were able to locate information for the majority of the questions but focusing teaching and learning in respect of scanning for information or detailed reading may be of benefit here.</p> <p>The punctuation question in the Reading section continues to prove challenging for many candidates, who need to be aware of the punctuation requirements for this level.</p>
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Section 3 Performance relating to specific assessment criteria – Writing		
Stage 1 Writing	Plan	<p>Candidates continue to struggle to produce an appropriate plan.</p> <p>Candidates that do well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer each bullet point with a word, phrase or sentence. <p>Common errors made by candidates are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> copying out the bullet points simply writing the words ‘beginning’ ‘middle’ and ‘end’ with no elaboration dividing the space into 4 segments and numbering each one with no relevant response to the bullet points writing a draft in the plan box, which does not attract the mark.
	Length minimum 75 words	<p>Over half of the candidates produced a piece of writing that met the minimum word count of at least 75 words. Noticeably more candidates attempted the writing too.</p> <p>Candidates that did well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote at sufficient length to potentially attract the maximum marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

		<p>Candidates had less success at accessing the mark when they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wrote less than 75 words • wrote more than 100 words, as their control of SPaG and sequencing deteriorated as they attempted to write more.
	Content	<p>In this series fewer candidates addressed all three bullet points, but there was a slight increase in those that achieved two out of the three marks.</p> <p>Candidates that scored well here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had planned their writing and were, therefore, more likely to cover all three points and stay on topic. <p>Less able candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not write on the topic provided and so did not access marks on plan or content. <p>It should be noted that candidates who write off topic can still access marks on all other criteria for their writing ability.</p>
	Legible writing	<p>Legibility remained good. Candidates achieving this mark wrote in legible handwriting throughout or for most of the paper.</p> <p>It is extremely important that candidates use a black or blue pen. Some candidates initially write in pencil and then go over their writing in ink. This is very difficult to read, as is the writing done in pencil.</p>
	Paragraphs	<p>Candidates continue to find paragraphs challenging.</p> <p>Candidates that accessed the mark here wrote a minimum of two paragraphs. These were indicated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • line spacing, arrows or lines to show where a new paragraph begins. <p>This is a valuable mark and candidates should be made aware of the need for paragraphs in their writing.</p>
	Sequencing	<p>The majority of candidates coped well with sequencing.</p> <p>Candidates that scored marks here tended to have a plan which aided the sequencing of their writing.</p>
	Spelling	<p>Spelling continues to prove a challenge, especially in achieving the full two marks.</p>

		<p>Candidates that did well here wrote in standard English and not in text speak.</p> <p>For candidates that found spelling more challenging the following errors were common:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="611 315 1503 577"> <tr> <td>alot not a lot</td> <td>apart not a part</td> <td>them selves for themselves</td> <td>make for made</td> </tr> <tr> <td>cause not because</td> <td>writting not writing</td> <td>brakes not breaks</td> <td>garabage for garbage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>now a days for nowadays</td> <td>recycling for recycling</td> <td>all ways for always</td> <td>diarns for drains</td> </tr> </table>	alot not a lot	apart not a part	them selves for themselves	make for made	cause not because	writting not writing	brakes not breaks	garabage for garbage	now a days for nowadays	recycling for recycling	all ways for always	diarns for drains
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	Punctuation	<p>Candidates continue to find punctuation challenging.</p> <p>At this level, candidates need to understand the need for a capital letter at the start of the sentence and a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark at the end.</p> <p>It should be noted that Stage 1 candidates are not assessed on commas or apostrophes and should be advised of this, especially in relation to the punctuation question in the Reading section.</p> <p>Candidates that do well here understand the difference between using a full stop or question mark at the end of the sentence.</p> <p>Candidates that do not access as many marks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use capital letters at the start of a word (that is not the start of a sentence or a proper noun) or within a word, which results in them being penalised for improper use of upper case. • use 'i' as opposed to 'I' when writing in the first person. <p>It should be noted that if a candidate uses appropriate punctuation throughout their writing, in respect of the start and end of the sentence, they could still lose all the punctuation marks because of the inappropriate use of capital letters within words.</p>												
	Grammar	<p>Candidates found it challenging to achieve marks for grammar.</p> <p>The main issues continue to be subject verb agreement and inconsistent use of tenses, both singular and plural. For example - have, has (often seen as, 'as') and had, and the incorrect use of 'a' and 'an'.</p>												

		<p>Stronger candidates use the indefinite and definite articles correctly, and also understand the difference between they, there, their and they're.</p> <p>Common errors are:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>an/and</td> <td>uses/use</td> <td>they/there</td> <td>or/an</td> </tr> <tr> <td>as/has</td> <td>much/more</td> <td>lives/life</td> <td>their/there</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a/an</td> <td>they/the</td> <td>makes/more</td> <td>there/they're</td> </tr> </table>	an/and	uses/use	they/there	or/an	as/has	much/more	lives/life	their/there	a/an	they/the	makes/more	there/they're
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Stage 2 Writing	Plan	<p>Candidates continue to struggle to produce an appropriate plan.</p> <p>Candidates that do well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer each bullet point with a word, phrase or sentence. <p>Common errors made by candidates are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> copying out the bullet points simply writing the words 'beginning' 'middle' and 'end' with no elaboration dividing the space into 4 segments and numbering each one with no relevant response to the bullet points. 												
	Length minimum 200 words	<p>Only a third of the candidates produced a piece of writing that met the minimum word count of at least 200 words. While most candidates attempted the writing, it was noticeable that their attempts were markedly short of the minimum word count and were generally around 100 words.</p> <p>Candidates that did well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote at sufficient length to potentially attract the maximum marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar. <p>Candidates need to be aware that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing less than 99 words will have a marked effect on their logical sequence, language and SPaG marks. 												
	Content	<p>In this series fewer candidates addressed all three bullet points, but there was a slight increase in those that achieved one or two out of the three marks.</p> <p>Candidates that scored well here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> had planned their writing and were, therefore, more likely to cover all three points and stay on topic. <p>Less able candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not write on the topic provided and so did not access marks on plan or content. 												

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	Legible	<p>Legibility remained good. Candidates achieving this mark wrote in legible handwriting throughout or for most of the paper.</p> <p>It is extremely important that candidates use a black or blue pen. Some candidates initially write in pencil and then go over their writing in ink. This is very difficult to read, as is the writing produced in pencil.</p>												
	Paragraphs	<p>Less than half of the candidates demonstrated the use of paragraphs.</p> <p>Candidates that accessed the mark here wrote a minimum of two paragraphs. These were indicated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> line spacing, arrows or lines to show where a new paragraph begins. <p>This is a valuable mark and candidates should be made aware of the need for paragraphs in their writing.</p>												
	Format and Structure	<p>Candidates need to be aware of how these marks are allocated, depending on the format of their writing.</p> <p>Candidates that achieved the full two marks for the article:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gave their writing a clear heading had a beginning, middle and end. 												
	Language	<p>While a large number of candidates achieved at least one of the three marks, many still used, for example, clumsy expressions or text speak.</p> <p>Common errors are:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="609 1294 1505 1447"> <tr> <td>keep/hold</td> <td>bought/brought</td> <td>lend/borrow</td> <td>til/until</td> </tr> <tr> <td>overuse of etc.</td> <td>overuse of also</td> <td>wanna</td> <td>gonna</td> </tr> <tr> <td>overuse of /</td> <td>use of &</td> <td>stuff</td> <td>dem</td> </tr> </table>	keep/hold	bought/brought	lend/borrow	til/until	overuse of etc.	overuse of also	wanna	gonna	overuse of /	use of &	stuff	dem
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	Logical Sequence	<p>Over half the candidates achieved the full two marks.</p> <p>Candidates that scored marks here tended to have a plan which aided the sequencing of their writing</p>												
	Sentence Structure	<p>Sentence structure continues to show a slight improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this level, only the use of simple and compound sentences is required and incorrect complex sentences are not penalised. 												

	<p>Spelling</p>	<p>Spelling continues to prove challenging for many candidates with few achieving the full three marks.</p> <p>Common errors were:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="612 280 1503 544"> <tr> <td>alot not a lot</td> <td>apart not a part</td> <td>them selves for themselves</td> <td>make for made</td> </tr> <tr> <td>cause not because</td> <td>writting not writing</td> <td>brakes not breaks</td> <td>garabage for garbage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>now a days for nowadays</td> <td>recyling for recycling</td> <td>all ways for always</td> <td>diarns for drains</td> </tr> </table>	alot not a lot	apart not a part	them selves for themselves	make for made	cause not because	writting not writing	brakes not breaks	garabage for garbage	now a days for nowadays	recyling for recycling	all ways for always	diarns for drains
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	<p>Punctuation</p>	<p>There was a noticeable decline in the number of candidates accessing the full three marks.</p> <p>At this level, candidates should understand the need for a capital letter at the start of the sentence and a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark at the end.</p> <p>It should be noted that Stage 2 candidates are not assessed on commas or apostrophes and should be advised of this, especially in relation to the punctuation question in the Reading section.</p> <p>Candidates that do well here understand the difference between using a full stop or question mark at the end of the sentence.</p> <p>Candidates that do not access as many marks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use capital letters at the start of a word (that is not the start of a sentence or a proper noun) or within a word, which results in them being penalised for improper use of upper case • use ‘i’ as opposed to ‘I’ when writing in the first person. <p>It should be noted that if a candidate uses appropriate punctuation throughout their writing in respect of the start and end of the sentence, they could still lose all the punctuation marks, because of the inappropriate use of capital letters within words.</p>												

	Grammar	<p>Candidates continue to find it challenging to achieve marks for grammar.</p> <p>The main issues continue to be subject verb agreement and inconsistent use of tenses, both singular and plural. For example - have, has (often seen as, 'as') and had, and the incorrect use of 'a' and 'an'.</p> <p>Stronger candidates use the indefinite and definite articles correctly and also understand the difference between they, there, their and they're.</p> <p>Common errors are:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="611 600 1503 757"> <tr> <td>an/and</td> <td>uses/use</td> <td>they/there</td> <td>or/an</td> </tr> <tr> <td>as/has</td> <td>much/more</td> <td>lives/life</td> <td>their/there</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a/an</td> <td>they/the</td> <td>makes/more</td> <td>there/they're</td> </tr> </table>	an/and	uses/use	they/there	or/an	as/has	much/more	lives/life	their/there	a/an	they/the	makes/more	there/they're
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	Length minimum 300 words	<p>Only a small number of candidates produced a piece of writing that met the minimum word count of at least 300 words. While most candidates attempted the writing, it was noticeable that their attempts were markedly short of the minimum word count and were generally around 100 - 200 words.</p> <p>Candidates that did well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote at sufficient length to potentially attract the maximum marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar. <p>Candidates need to be aware that:</p>												

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	Clear and Coherent	Overall, the writing was clear and coherent with a large number achieving at least two of the three marks available. However, some candidates rambled and repeated themselves in order to reach the 300 word minimum.												
	Logical Sequence	There was a noticeable decline in the number of candidates who achieved the full three marks, although there was an improvement in the number who achieved one or two marks. Candidates that scored marks here tended to have a plan which aided the sequencing of their writing.												
	Sentence Structure	This series, sentence structure appeared to be challenging for a number of candidates. At this level candidates need to demonstrate the use of simple and compound sentences and have at least one correct complex sentence.												
	Spelling	Spelling continues to prove challenging for many candidates with few achieving the full four marks. Over half of the candidates were awarded two marks. Common errors were: <table border="1" data-bbox="609 981 1503 1243"> <tr> <td>alot not a lot</td> <td>apart not a part</td> <td>them selves for themselves</td> <td>make for made</td> </tr> <tr> <td>cause not because</td> <td>writing not writing</td> <td>brakes not breaks</td> <td>garabage for garbage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>now a days for nowadays</td> <td>recyling for recycling</td> <td>all ways for always</td> <td>diarns for drains</td> </tr> </table>	alot not a lot	apart not a part	them selves for themselves	make for made	cause not because	writing not writing	brakes not breaks	garabage for garbage	now a days for nowadays	recyling for recycling	all ways for always	diarns for drains
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	Punctuation	There was a decline in the number of candidates accessing the full four marks, with under half achieving at least two marks. At this level, candidates need to understand the need for a capital letter at the start of the sentence and a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark at the end and the appropriate use of commas, apostrophes and inverted commas. Candidates that do not access as many marks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use capital letters at the start of a word (that is not the start of a sentence or a proper noun) or within a word, which results in them being penalised for improper use of upper case. • use 'i' as opposed to 'I' when writing in the first person • use commas inappropriately • omit apostrophes. 												

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	Grammar	<p>Candidates continue to find it challenging to achieve marks for grammar, with over one third receiving none of the four marks available.</p> <p>The main issues continue to be subject verb agreement and inconsistent use of tenses, both singular and plural. For example - have, has (often seen as, 'as') and had, and the incorrect use of 'a' and 'an'.</p> <p>Stronger candidates use the indefinite and definite articles correctly and also understand the difference between they, there, their and they're.</p> <p>Common errors are:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>an/and</td> <td>uses/use</td> <td>they/there</td> <td>or/an</td> </tr> <tr> <td>as/has</td> <td>much/more</td> <td>lives/life</td> <td>their/there</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a/an</td> <td>they/the</td> <td>makes/more</td> <td>there/they're</td> </tr> </table>	an/and	uses/use	they/there	or/an	as/has	much/more	lives/life	their/there	a/an	they/the	makes/more	there/they're
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	Proof reading	<p>Over half of the candidates signed their name to say they had proof read their writing.</p> <p>Candidates need to be aware that as long as they have written at least a sentence, they will be awarded this mark if they provide a signature.</p>												

Section 4 Areas of good performance

Candidates who achieved a merit or distinction generally demonstrated:

- an understanding of the main purpose of a text
- the skill to read the questions carefully
- the ability to relate an image to print and gain understanding
- skills to find an appropriate dictionary definition and synonyms
- knowledge of grammar and punctuation in the Reading section
- the skill to write at the requisite length with good sentence structure, in a logical sequence whilst being clear and coherent and covering all content points
- the skill to write out a plan to inform writing
- SPaG skills
- that they were able to structure their piece of writing
- the use of Standard English.

Section 5 Areas for development

Candidates need:

- to be aware of the punctuation being assessed for their level and not try to work above it
- a greater command of grammar in both the Reading and Writing sections of the paper
- to be able to use dictionaries when required
- to understand the type of organisational features that could appear on a paper and the correct way to answer the question

- to carefully read the questions in the Reading section to locate specific information
- to produce an appropriate plan to inform their writing
- to use capital letters appropriately in the Writing section
- to have knowledge of format and structure for the required piece of writing.

Section 6 Recommendations and advice for centres

Centres should:

- ensure candidates have a 'dark' blue or black pen to ensure legibility of their script
- ensure there is access to a dictionary for all candidates so that they are not disadvantaged, and that candidates are aware of the definition required eg, noun, adjective etc., where appropriate
- give candidates the opportunity to do at least one sample paper to explore queries on question formation and what the assessment is looking to achieve
- remind candidates that there are only some questions which require complete sentences or paragraphs
- remind candidates that they should not repeat the question stem in the answer
- remind candidates to look at the number of marks per question so that they can achieve maximum marks by giving the requisite number of answers
- advise candidates to finish their writing when they have achieved the minimum word length if they have no further substantive information to impart
- remind Stage 1 candidates that filling in name, address and telephone number; writing a sentence using correct spelling, punctuation and grammar; circling an instruction and signing to say the sentence has been checked for accuracy attracts nearly one third of the reading marks
- advise candidates at every stage that they should **not** use the plan box to write a rough draft, as this does not achieve any marks and wastes time
- ensure candidates practise writing the minimum amount of words required for their stage and check their writing for SPaG errors
- remind candidates that spelling, punctuation and grammar are not assessed in the Reading section
- be aware of the criteria for the stage so that candidates are not trying to work above the level, particularly with punctuation.