

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/11

Paper 11

Key Messages

- make full use of your time to prepare and proof read your work
- stay focused on the key words to answer the question as set
- avoid basic errors in the English and use your vocabulary in the appropriate context

General comments

The improvement in the structuring of essays has been maintained by the majority of Centres. Introductions usually set the scene for what is to follow in a succinct manner. However, there is still scope to improve conclusions. Some candidates simply list the main points of the essay without pulling the threads of the argument together and without any substantial reference to their own opinions.

The standard of English covered the whole range of the mark scheme. The best essays were fluent with appropriate expression, grammar and vocabulary. Weaker scripts contained a variety of errors and were sometimes written in an informal style which did not match the serious content of this examination.

Some candidates had edited their English thoroughly and systematically before handing in their work and, therefore, careless errors were relatively rare. Those candidates who do not routinely run these checks are strongly advised to do so.

Examiners found some poorly presented scripts. Scarcely legible handwriting, no margins on the answer paper and missing question numbers are the main problems.

Rubric infringements are now relatively rare.

The following points embracing Use of English, essay technique and content are presented in bullet points style to help candidates remember them:

- take time to read **all** questions very carefully **before** making your choice
- If you are not **absolutely** sure of the **exact** meaning of the question, do **not** attempt it
- look carefully at the **key words** in the questions you intend answering
- do **not** write all you know about the topic - **answer** the question as set
- prepare an essay **plan** which remains **focused** on the **key words** in the question
- ensure the plan **shows** that you have sufficient knowledge to meet the **requirements of the question**
- check and edit the essay **structure** regarding introduction, main body and conclusion
- avoid vagueness, **generalisation**, assertion and sweeping comments
- ensure that your **major** points are sufficiently **detailed**
- always illustrate your **major** points with convincing **examples** (local/national/international)
- remember the maximum length of an essay is **500 words** approximately.
- leave **enough** time to check your work
- ensure you have answered the question **as set** without superfluous **digression**
- check your English **systematically** correcting any **careless** errors.

Use of time

Most candidates did not encounter problems with the time allowance for this syllabus. However, a number of candidates spend too much time on one essay to the detriment of the second essay. The second essay is often hurried and sometimes incomplete. Both essays should be about 500 words long. Essays of fewer than 375 words have marks deducted proportionally for the Use of English. Poor use of time also means

that little or no time is left to edit work with due care. Do not waste valuable time by writing sections of prose which are then crossed out and rewritten or by changing a started question.

Use of English

Examiners saw a wide range of candidates' ability to write English fluently. Some candidates have virtually full operational command of the language and therefore score highly in the Use of English mark but the weakest candidates are unable to express themselves with any real accuracy which often means that the content can lack clarity. However, in most cases, even if the English is not totally accurate or the idiom is sometimes not fully appropriate, there is no real problem following the gist of the argument.

Some candidates often have a wide range of vocabulary at their disposal but are not always able to use it effectively in the correct context. This problem usually arises when candidates acquire their vocabulary on a one word for one word equivalent basis and not in a phrase or sentence which is easy to remember.

It is a shame that marks are needlessly lost because of basic errors, especially when these crop up year after year and are reported on in these Reports year after year. A systematic eradication of these rudimentary errors, examples of which are listed below, is the quickest and surest route to score higher marks for the Use of English element:

- subject/verb non-agreement.
- missing endings on plural nouns because of carelessness and/or poor checking
- the pronoun 'one' should not be followed by 'they'/'their'
- frequent incorrect use of definite and indefinite articles
- confusion between their/there, to/too, here/hear, crisis/crises and practice/practise
- incorrect use of apostrophes
- incorrect comparative forms such as more easier/more richer/more harder
- incorrect use of commas leading to loss and/or ambiguity of meaning
- words not separated, e.g. 'alot' 'infact' 'aswell'
- use of 'etc.' to be avoided
- 'in a nutshell' is colloquial and not suitable as the opening of the concluding paragraph
- e.g. incorrectly rendered as 'for e.g.'

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Not an overly popular question but usually confidently answered by those with an interest in economic affairs. Many candidates were able to analyse measures which were aiding economic recovery and they also discussed others which so far have produced little or no improvement.

Question 2

There were few answers and most of these were poor because of little awareness or understanding of how historians gather their evidence and arrive at their conclusions. A few scripts did, however, demonstrate how historians, looking at more recent events, have access to a plethora of information to facilitate their work.

Question 3

Quite a popular question. Quite a number of candidates focused on promises made in election campaigns which are later not honoured. Some took examples of dishonest 'villains' from history, such as Hitler and Stalin. Against these, Mandela and Gandhi were seen as honest and praiseworthy. Better answers linked dishonesty with corruption of various kinds at all levels in many developing countries.

Question 4

This was a popular question. Weaker candidates confused immigration with migration, emigration and rural to urban drift. Stronger candidates produced a balanced answer including benefits such as cheap labour, increased GDP, closing any skills gap and cultural diversity. Disadvantages were focused around resentment from local people because of alleged job losses to incomers, overcrowding, increasing crime rates and cultural dilution. Due reference was made to the impact and importance of the various waves of

immigration into the USA and there was appropriate reference to 'economic' migrants caused by the push/pull factors between affluent and poorer nations

Question 5

Also a popular question with too many descriptive answers which were often limited to several examples of 'valuable' advice received from 'model' parents. Some candidates did probe deeper and even questioned parental advice which did not take any notice of current ideas and mores. A few candidates also recognised that their parents were also trying to 'live their dreams' through their children and did not take sufficient notice of the wishes and preferences of their youngsters.

Question 6

A reasonably popular topic but not always well answered. Weaker answers seemed to be unaware that this possibility was already available and some even envisaged the question as referring to parents seeking a gender change in their young child. There was a complete disagreement between those promoting a very liberal attitude towards this matter and those opposing it for ethical or religious reasons. However, some realised the attraction of gender choice in China where the number of children is regulated or in other countries, where male babies are a prized asset. The question of cost was seldom considered.

Question 7

A moderately popular question. The key words 'suitability' and 'sufficient' did not feature prominently in weaker responses and these candidates tended to view solar energy as a complete solution to all the world's energy problems as the sun's rays come free of charge. Better informed candidates recognised the limited potential of solar energy to power towns and industries but did acknowledge its useful role as part-provider of power in combination with an array of other energy sources.

Question 8

A reasonably popular response where answers were, unfortunately, often short on factual accuracy. Most candidates from many different countries had obviously watched 'An inconvenient Truth' and had clearly believed the issues depicted without reserve. They struggled to tell the difference between global warming and climate change and often depicted an imminent scenario of natural disasters culminating in the end of the world in the very near future. They were obviously unaware of the controversy around this topic and felt that they, the young generation, could influence and even control climate control. Better answers looked at both sides of the topic and knew that parts of Al Gore's work and the predictions of the IPCC had been challenged and sometimes discredited by expert climatologists,

Question 9

Not a popular question and seldom well answered. The key words 'Internet gambling' were often given scant attention which gave rise to answers discussing the benefits and drawbacks of the Internet and/or the perils of gambling with little or no mention of the Internet variant.

Question 10

Very few responses to this question. Candidates demonstrated very little knowledge of the steps already taken in provide protection against pandemics in the future whilst others, from more developed countries, dismissed such preparations as unnecessary. The 'key words 'your country' were occasionally overlooked in favour of a global perspective.

Question 11

Not a popular choice. Weaker candidates did not comprehend 'subsidise' so it is not really clear why they chose this question. Some answers from developing countries opposed the notion of giving money to the arts as there were other more urgent deserving causes, such as better education, better housing and improved health care.

Question 12

A very popular question. Many candidates suggested that 'you cannot judge a book by its covers' and adapted that saying to fit the question. Stronger candidates considered dress often as an indicator of social status but also conceded that appearances can be deceptive. They also pointed out that some clothing is meant to conceal the identity whereas working clothes/uniforms are often a means of identification. Some candidates noticed that many dress according to how we wish to be perceived.

Question 13

This was not a very popular choice. The key word 'celebrity' was fully illustrated by naming famous sports, media people and royal families but 'ever increasing' did not attract sufficient attention. Better answers stressed the popular need for role models or even idols and it is this need which drives the huge media circus. Some also noted the quite common aspiration of youngsters in developed countries to want to be 'famous' with all the glitz and glamour this entails.

Question 14

Reasonably popular with a high percentage of satisfactory-to-good answers. Most identified a number of political, economic and social reasons for the desirability of learning a foreign language. English was identified as the dominant world language, with a large number of mother tongue speakers and a vast number of second language speakers. Many positive aspects of English were mentioned, including its use in global politics, economics, science, tourism. However, this should not mean that native English speakers would not profit from learning other languages as this provides access to another country and a deeper insight into its culture, with the bonus of a new appreciation of one's own language.

Question 15

An unpopular question which was not answered well. Answers tended to be generalised, often with no specific buildings named and little discussion of how 'useless' or not they are.

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Paper 8004/12

Paper 12

Key Messages

- Pay greater attention to the wording of the question. Many candidates see a word in the question, such as 'television', and write a generalised essay on the topic – and so score badly.
- Plan each answer carefully before beginning to write – unplanned essays score badly.
- Allow ample time to check work before the end of the examination – to avoid careless errors.

General comments

There were many detailed and thorough responses which answered the question set and gave a variety of relevant examples to illustrate their main arguments. There were also many responses which contained few examples, resulting in vague and generalised arguments that lacked conviction.

Candidates should focus on their own country when prompted to in the question; if this is not asked for, then a broader focus is required. Many candidates made good use of their knowledge of the topic they were writing about and were able to include examples to support their ideas. There were some detailed and well balanced arguments evident from a good number of candidates.

The vast majority of candidates used the time wisely and were able to write in clear paragraphs, using largely clear expression. There were also lots of clearly structured essays, with an evident introduction and conclusion. Many used the introduction to give a history/ background of the topic when it would have been better to begin with an immediate focus on the wording of the question, with an exploration of the issues that are raised by it. Some conclusions merely repeated content from the rest of the essay, rather than drawing a final conclusion and stating a clear, personal point of view.

The following points embracing Use of English, essay technique and content:

- handwriting was sometimes hard to read
- few candidates show evidence of careful planning, which is reflected in the disorganisation of the content in many essays
- there were very few instances of rubric infringements this year, although several essays were short and lost marks for the Use of English, as a result
- candidates need to answer the question set and not everything they know about a previously rehearsed topic area or a question they would like to have been set
- Several candidates ignored the wording 'in your country' in their responses and wrote too broadly about other places, which was irrelevant
- There was evidence of essays that followed a formula, beginning with 'Imagine...', developing with 'I will now elaborate' and ending with a general comment such as 'Why would you think any differently when I have put my points so clearly.' This is not good practise as it does not allow for creativity and originality in the response.

Use of English

Use of English Marks can be needlessly lost through basic errors, examples of which are listed below:

- subject/verb non-agreement
- Use of informal vocabulary such as 'kinda', 'gotta', 'kids'
- The use of the clichéd phrase 'In a nutshell' should be avoided as it is colloquial and not appropriate formal English
- missing endings on plural nouns because of carelessness and/or poor checking
- using incorrect plural instead of singular words: electricities, behaviours, informations and technologies instead of electricity, behaviour, information and technology
- the pronoun 'one' can not be followed by 'they'/'their'
- frequent incorrect use of definite and indefinite articles
- confusion between their/there, to/too, here/hear, crisis/crises and practice/practise
- incorrect use of apostrophes
- incorrect comparative forms such as more easier/more richer/more harder
- incorrect use of commas leading to loss and/or ambiguity of meaning
- words not separated, e.g. 'alot' 'infact' 'aswell'
- use of 'etc.'
- e.g. incorrectly rendered as 'for e.g.'
- using the term 'Internet', rather than 'The Internet' and 'government' instead of 'the government'
- common spelling errors included: infront, aswellas, anymore, lifes

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was not a popular choice and several candidates chose to describe the source of the financial crises at length before focusing on the question, which was not a good approach. The most successful candidates addressed the question immediately and explored the various approaches their country had adopted to counteract the global financial crises. Other answers quickly ran out of things to say and were only able to generalise on measures taken by their government, with little or no evidence of any positive or negative impact.

Question 2

Many answers to this question did not show enough knowledge of historical events and generalised on the two world wars and other local events. The more successful answers explored the implications of history on current affairs and possible future events. Most answers ignored the word 'foolish' in the question, which resulted in less focused responses. Lots of answers focused on a list of mistakes which we must learn from history and little else. More successful answers had a good focus on their own country's historical failures and how they had not learnt from them, showing their foolishness in ignoring history.

Question 3

A number of good responses to this question explored what their government was doing wrong, with some detailed criticism of policy problems, including education, the environment and policing. There were also some successful answers that complimented their government, saying how successful it had been in creating an integrated peaceful society. There were few balanced essays which explored both positive and negative aspects of their government. The word 'deserves' was often missed by candidates, which led to a good opportunity being missed to explore whether people voted for the right reasons with an informed approach.

Question 4

Successful candidates were able to illustrate issues, such as the historical influx of certain groups working in the construction industry. Good points included the threat to jobs of those already living in the country, as well as placing a strain on the infrastructure in areas like education, benefits and services. Some saw the positive side of immigration with people prepared to take jobs that locals refused and how there could be benefits in terms of educated and skilled workers taking on roles such as doctors, nurses and dentists. Many candidates mistakenly chose to write about migration within a country or emigration and not about

immigration. As a result, answers were often vague and off topic. There needed to be much clearer exemplification of points made.

Question 5

This was a popular choice. There were many descriptive accounts of what an extended family was, and many comparisons with nuclear families. A number of responses discussed the advantages in considerable detail, focusing on key issues such as financial and emotional support. It was interesting to read many answers which gave great insight into local customs and traditions. Some responses were confused, with a focus on a large family, with too many children, rather than an extended family. Others chose to generalise on the role of the family in modern society, rather than exploring the topic in terms of the wording of the question.

Question 6

There were some very strong views presented in answer to this question. Some candidates spent too much time focusing on past ideals and not on current practice. The better answers explored how the male baby is still seen as more preferable and why, including debate on issues such as the family name, dowries and the male being the provider. There were some fascinating insights into the female role as home maker, being deprived of an education and being seen as second class citizens. Few explored how the role of the female is changing in society, still considering the male baby as preferable in their society, even today. Few candidates wrote about issues beyond their own country, which often limited debate, as the question does allow for a discussion on attitudes in various countries.

Question 7

A very popular choice. There were a number of detailed comments on the advantages of hydroelectric power, with some valid comments on their eco-friendliness and renewability. Many candidates did not exemplify the points they made with actual examples, which meant that many answers were not clear or lacked conviction. Answers often began with a very general and unnecessary summary of the various forms of power generation methods there are today and why we need more electricity, before alluding to the question. Many discussed the problems with dams, but chose either to include no illustration of this or to use one dam and to assume this applied to all. Comments on the high cost of building a HEP station were rarely exemplified. There were also lots of comments on the displacement of humans and wildlife, with no examples to illustrate this, making this line of argument very unconvincing. There were also some irrelevant points made, such as commenting on tourism and farming, when the question asked about HEP 'generation'.

Question 8

This question was not a popular choice, but several candidates who answered it were knowledgeable on the topic and detailed many local initiatives. Others were less clear and did not give any examples to show schemes being adopted, making generalised comments on education, recycling, tree planting and litter picking schemes. Many candidates needed to focus more on the words 'How effectively engaged' in the question, which would have helped arguments to develop.

Question 9

There were some very good answers that demonstrated a variety of reasons for the popularity of these games, highlighting advanced graphics, social links on the Internet, realism and affordability as key reasons. This was a popular question and many answers were lengthy, but often were quite descriptive and lacked analysis. Some listed games and explained why each of them was popular, rather than giving an overview, with the games as examples to highlight the main points. Many candidates showed good knowledge of computer and console games but did not focus fully on 'account for the popularity' in the question, choosing to describe games and the history of computer games.

Question 10

Many candidates found it difficult to deal with all the areas covered in the question. A large number discussed what normal personal incomes amounted to and how much people were able to afford the 'basics' with this. Others spent too much time discussing how people spent their money on luxury goods, such as televisions, MP3 players and the desire to holiday abroad, instead of focusing on basics such as decent food and clothing, therefore not fully addressing the ideas in the question. There were references to those less

fortunate and needy citizens in society, but there were often narrow-focused responses which did not look further than the candidate's own personal experience.

Question 11

This was a very popular question, but many candidates scored low marks because they did not answer the question set. Many saw this as an opportunity to discuss the merits/ demerits of television, with no reference to 'live entertainment' at all in their answer. Others took the approach of looking at how live entertainment is now shown on television, but did not say how television had affected it. The better answers were able to discuss issues such as declining live audience figures at events such as pop concerts, football matches and theatre shows. It would have been useful to read more exemplification of these events, with specific proof of the issues discussed. Very few argued that television had no impact on live entertainment as audience figures were just as strong, if not greater now than ever. There were a high number of answers that saw television very negatively and blamed it for all society's ills. It would have been pleasing to have read about local 'live entertainment' and how this had been affected by people's use of television, but very few candidates took the opportunity to do this.

Question 12

The small number who successfully answered this question were able to give examples of how local languages have influenced the way English is spoken; few candidates were able to amply demonstrate this in terms of written English. Many candidates encountered difficulties when answering this question, choosing to write about how English had influenced their language when the question was asking how their local language had influenced the way that English was spoken and written in their country. As a result, a great number of the responses were largely irrelevant to the question set.

Question 13

A number of good candidates focused on how their society has become almost obsessed with fashion and that people, especially the younger generation, were pressurised by the media and peers into buying and wearing certain items, instead of local, cultural items. Many answers would have benefited from more detailed examples to illustrate the points being made. Candidates did not need to look exclusively at clothing, although most did, but were able to focus on other fashionable items including cars, MP3 players and other gadgets; several chose to do this, resulting in more diverse and interesting responses.

Question 14

Many candidates chose to focus on which sites require payment and which do not, so there was comment on free social networking sites compared to the charges for downloading music and film content. Few explored that it costs money to access Broadband/ dial-up connections before any sites are accessed and therefore missed a large part of the argument. There were many passionate views, although some were too assertive and lacked logical reason, such as the candidate who argued that it was right that music was free to download because some people cannot afford it, without thinking of the artist not being recompensed. Others argued that asking for payment to access certain sites would stop children from accessing inappropriate content. Many responses lacked a full knowledge of the topic and were superficial, lacking supporting examples.

Question 15

Very few attempted this question. Those that did ranged from the well-informed who were able to relate Shakespeare's works such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* to values and ideals today. More direct referencing to the plays would have been useful, including quotations and further details of characters, themes and messages, but these were normally dealt with on a superficial level. One candidate explored how the issue of arranged marriages in *Romeo and Juliet* is still a very important debate today; another commented on how the issue of greed and manipulation demonstrated in *Macbeth* was equally relevant in modern society.