



Pearson

# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English Language (4EB0) Paper 01

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Summer 2017

Publications Code 4EB0\_01\_1706\_ER

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## **Introduction**

Examiners commented that the texts about work were accessible across the full range of abilities and candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately.

Better candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond thoughtfully and articulately. Their writing responses were often engaging and effective and were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often pedestrian or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

Examiners commented that a significant number of candidates did not attempt to use their own words in the questions that asked for them. It is essential that candidates should try to use their own words in order to be successful in responding to these questions.

There are still candidates who copy out all or considerable chunks of the extracts in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose. Similarly responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays or re-worked plots from novels, games or films. Examiners commented that this was especially a problem in response to Question 12b this series.

There are still some responses to Question 11 and 12 that lack paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response. There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses and examiners commented that many candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

## **Section A (Questions 1-10)**

This consists of mainly short answer questions that require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

There were some very good answers to questions 1-9 but many candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words thus limiting their performance.

Questions 1, 2, 5 & 6 generally produced successful responses. Where candidates lost marks on Question 1 it was often because they did not refer to the desk when making points about the invoices or tea stains. The common error on Question 2 was to refer to the narrator's qualifications as the reason that Mr Hoskyns was impressed. Question 5 was generally well answered but some candidates incorrectly commented on the papergirl having 'a dog in tow'. Most candidates responded successfully to Question 6 with the most common error being selling newspapers rather than doing a newspaper round. Examiners did comment that some candidates used their own words for this question or gave too much information.

All examiners commented that responses to questions requiring candidates to use their own words (3, 4, 8 & 9) quite often had direct lifting from the

texts. This seems to be a continuing problem, with some candidates using quotations from the texts in quotation marks which is not a successful way to respond to this type of question. Some examiners commented that candidates tended to use key words and phrases exactly as written in the extracts. However some examiners commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words.

In responding to Question 3 some examiners commented that many candidates were generally successful in re-wording in this response. Other examiners commented that many candidates did not use their own words and candidates often struggled to find alternatives to 'trundled', 'loaded', 'roam' and 'replenish', often lifting whole sentences.

Responses to Question 4 also had evidence of candidates not attempting to use their own words but some examiners commented that candidates were able to re-word some points successfully. A number of candidates were unable to find alternative words to 'competed fiercely', 'raced', 'favourable pitch' and 'dwindling stocks', but there were some good responses that managed to find alternatives to some of the later points such as 'felt upset at winning', 'felt regret that he hadn't let them win' and 'he won the challenge'.

In responding to Question 8 most candidates were able to provide two positive points and one negative point but again examiners commented on the amount of lifting from the text. However a number of examiners commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words e.g. 'hop on a bike' was changed to 'cycle' or 'cycled', 'Get up at 6am' was often converted to 'get up early' or 'wake up early', or changing 'pitch dark' to 'before it gets light' and 'dangerous' in place of 'the safety issues'. The most common lifts were 'hop on a bike', 'lose an hour's sleep' and 'pitch dark'. Question 9 produced a number of successful responses but examiners also commented that some candidates found it difficult to put answers into their own words. The most common points made were about being organised, the impact on schoolwork, the time involved and what they are capable. Candidates lifted 'every child is different' and 'Be realistic'. Occasionally candidates responded to the wrong part of the text.

Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and reinforce that candidates must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Question 7 - a significant number of candidates did not use their own words for their points, despite the rubric and layout of the question, which meant they could not achieve any marks. A number of candidates used quotation marks for their points which suggested they did not understand the requirement to use their own words. Similarly a number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point - often too close to the text to be rewarded. However the majority of candidates were able to identify relevant points and provide support for them. A good number were able to use their own words to make points such as 'they are better at looking after their own money' and 'they develop friendships with new people' or re-worded 'independence' into terms such as 'standing on own two feet' or 'not relying on parents for support' and provided suitable quotations to support their responses. When candidates had made an appropriate point in their own words they were generally able to choose appropriate support and therefore score full marks. The most commonly lifted points were: 'save and budget', 'it encourages independence', 'it

improves social skills' and 'commitment and responsibility'. At times, the points did not match up with the support although some examiners commented that candidates rarely mixed up the support for one point with that of another. A small number took details from outside the specified lines.

Centres need to continue to work with candidates to ensure they understand that they must use their own words for the point made and then provide a quotation from the text that supports the point.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able could provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. On the whole candidates preferred Text Two. There were some clear responses to this task showing that candidates had been well prepared for this question and had a secure understanding of what is required. If candidates are able to offer two clear reasons why they have chosen a text and support them with two clear references (quotations or developed explanation) and a clear reason for not picking the other text with appropriate support they will produce a successful response. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. A significant number of candidates were able to provide reasons both in terms of content and techniques used as to why they preferred one text or another. Candidates were able to select appropriate material from the texts to support these ideas. Stronger responses tended to pick out key differences, such as the detailed description in Text One or the multiple accounts and the several jobs in Text Two. A number of candidates were able to distinguish between the anecdotal nature of Text One and the advice being given in Text Two. More able candidates were able to comment on the different ways in which language devices were used in order to support their ideas. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. Examiners also commented that a significant number of candidates gave reasons for their chosen text and for not choosing the other text but gave no support for these reasons, achieving only 3 marks, or gave two reasons and support for their chosen text and a reason for not choosing the other text without supporting it, achieving 5 marks. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the texts, retelling the passages. Some weaker candidates found it easy to highlight which text they preferred but struggled to explain the reasons why and made comments such as 'it has better language' or 'it is difficult to understand', 'it is boring'. These problems suggest that some candidates have not been prepared for this task and unfortunately this limited candidates' achievement. Some examiners commented that the responses to this question have improved over recent series.

Centres will need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

### **Section B (Question 11)**

There was evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section. There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

One examiner commented that it was very interesting to read the different responses from candidates in very different social and cultural situations. There were a good number of lively, well written responses to this task. Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a school or college website contribution. It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. The most successful responses had a strong sense of audience and purpose and included personal touches and rhetorical language to engage the audience. Many candidates were able to adopt an appropriate register and there was clear evidence of an understanding of the purpose, audience and format required although some examiners commented that a number of candidates struggled to adopt an appropriate register. Most candidates were able to write a website article which included details about the advantages and disadvantages of working whilst studying, but many candidates combined the third bullet point (what might be learnt) with the first bullet point (the advantages). This caused candidates to miss the possible details for the third bullet point. Examiners also commented that a significant number of candidates did not address the third bullet point. Better responses covered all three bullets in depth and the very good responses showed a sophistication in incorporating and developing ideas thoroughly and engaging with their audience. Many strong responses successfully used the bullet point structure (advantages, disadvantages, what might be learnt) as a framework for their writing, using the bullet points as headings. Some candidates used examples of specific work situations which were based on their own experiences. Quite a few candidates just listed points for the three bullet points rather than covering the points in detail. These read more like a plan than a response and they were unable to demonstrate fluency. To gain high marks, candidates should cover a good range of points in detail. Weaker responses combined details from both texts with no sense of coherence or continuity. Some also lost the sense of audience, for example by starting the answer using second person pronouns, but then defaulting to third person when writing about teens. A few candidates wrote letters or speeches. Examiners commented that a number of candidates directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the response. Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar, and some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure which should help candidates to use basic paragraphing. Centres need to remind candidates that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement. Centres should continue to work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to adapt ideas from texts and how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes.

### **Section C (Question 12)**

12b was the most popular question.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. However the use of very long plans or draft essays is to be discouraged as they are not a good use of time. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

Examiners, as always, commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 12a produced some well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. There was evidence of engagement with the topic of work experience in some of the responses. Better responses commented in detail on different types work experience. There were some well written responses which were well-planned. In many responses there was strong engagement and candidates were generally able to write relevant responses with good examples and some drew on personal experiences such as personal anecdotal stories that showed an individual's own work experience and why it was useful. In better responses vocabulary choices were sophisticated and candidates were able to construct highly sophisticated arguments. Some responses were rather pedestrian and made a few basic points such as 'work experience is needed to help us get a job' and 'it can pay us money so we can buy things'. Weaker candidates simply listed the advantages and disadvantages. Weaker candidates had problems with both maintaining a clear argument and structuring their responses. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

A number of examiners commented that some responses relied too heavily on the extracts and some of the responses were very similar to responses to Question 11. The rubric for Question 12 clearly tells candidates not to retell the events from Text One and Text Two from the extracts booklet. Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b: The title 'An Interesting Offer' produced some lively and imaginative responses. Most examiners enjoyed reading the responses to this question with one examiner commenting: 'It's always fantastic to read these original responses. The outcomes were so varied, a real joy to read.' These responses were often engaging, funny or personal and were well-developed. There were a number of responses which achieved precision and clarity with extensive and mature vocabulary. The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question were able to produce a narrative with a reasonably clear plot but did not use much description or use language for effect. It was interesting to see the wide range of offers imagined by candidates such as the offer to assassinate someone, the offer to cheat in exams, offers to become a football player and to go bungee jumping. However one examiner commented on some disturbing stories involving rape, drugs, murder (usually of family members) and general hardship. Some examiners commented that some of the ideas were a little far-fetched. Some candidates were too ambitious and used either too much information or an over-complicated plot.

A number of examiners observed that there was evidence of prepared essays or templates and also the use of films, games and books for plot lines. This seemed to be more of a problem this series. These responses are never successful and responses to this section should be original writing. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Better responses showed control

of a variety of sentence types and paragraphing, with a range of short and long paragraphs and sentences used. Some over-used the two word paragraph or sentence, so that this technique lost its effectiveness. Weaker responses lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative together with poor language controls.

Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c: Examiners commented that there were some very interesting and moving responses to this title. Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Candidates produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing their ideal job. Candidates whose chose this response offered a range of ideas and crafted a range of differing responses. The more successful responses often considered the implications of what an ideal job might be. Some candidates produced a sustained response that successfully argued about a specific job they might like to do. These pieces were often organised and showed thought. There were some well organised, effective responses that described, in detail, the ideal job such as a football player, musician, doctor, teacher and politician. There were heartfelt responses: 'my ideal job is to be a doctor and support the people in my village'. One examiner commented that a response by a candidate who wished to be a journalist because he wanted to speak the truth was particularly moving. It was heartening to note that a number of candidates saw their ideal job as teaching. There was a distinct focus on the positives of gaining employment and what that would mean. Some candidates did not specifically mention a job in particular but instead detailed what expectations they have for the world of work and the benefits the job would bring to them: big houses, fast cars, money. Weaker candidates tended to produce responses that tended to be pedestrian and lacked detail or listed types of jobs that they might like to do and often only discussed each one briefly. Weaker responses were too vague and made generic comments like 'it is fun' 'it's a good job'. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary which they can use appropriately.

### **Quality of Written Communication (QWC)**

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

As in previous series, there was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar and expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure including missing words. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Examiners also commented on incorrect use of capital letters and missing capitalisation for the personal pronoun, comma splicing, missing apostrophes and misspelling of common homophones.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

## **Summary**

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- selected relevant points in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Question 12)
- used ambitious vocabulary
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- were not able to find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions
- did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied from the original texts in response to Question 11
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- sometimes used prepared essays or copied plots from films, games and novels in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and gramm

