

ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE H.G. PAPER 3

It is pleasing to report that there were several centres where good teaching was reflected in the candidates' scripts. Unfortunately, however, the poor quality of many of the scripts in weaker centres indicated a need for greater guidance and support. Many of the following comments were included in my report for November 2002, and it is to be hoped that these areas will continue to receive attention.

General comments

Understanding basic grammar can help candidates to create clear and accurate sentences. Educators are encouraged to revise parts of speech, verb forms, sentence construction and concord.

Candidates must be made aware of the need to include all punctuation in order to clarify meaning. All too often candidates failed to end their sentences with one of the three possible punctuation marks. Frequently run-on sentences or fragments occurred, and little use was made of the semicolon. The appropriate use of the comma needs to be adequately taught. A disturbing number of candidates wrote their entire paper in capital letters for which they were penalised.

There was a general improvement in examination technique this year, but some candidates paid no attention to the required length. They need to know that there is a penalty for a piece of work which is either too short or too long.

Section A: Extended writing

There were some excellent responses to each of the essay topics. It is clear that this paper is written by many mature learners who display their experience of life in the content of their writing. However, typical errors for which marks were lost included: misinterpretation of the topic, not supplying a title, lack of paragraphing, inadequate structuring, irrelevance, and limited vocabulary.

Section B: Short piece of writing

Most candidates presented the correct format of the informal and formal letters, and letter to the editor, but often marks were lost through inappropriate endings such as 'Yours faithfully' at the end of an informal letter. Moreover, candidates needed to read the questions carefully in order to make sure that they included all the required information in their answers. Some candidates did not realize that a letter to an editor is not written to the editor *personally*, but is intended to be read by the general public.

Section C: Other short pieces of writing

In general, Questions 10 and 11 were popular choices, and there were some excellent answers. Most learners who chose Question 9 did not earn high marks through the use of poor tone and register, as well as inappropriate format.