

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BGCSE ENGLISH

2024

PAPER 1: CONTINUOUS WRITING

General Comments

This 2024 English Language examination marking session was characterised by candidate tendencies and cognitive behaviour that was observed in the previous year's examination. Candidates generally exhibited the same traits with regard to their strengths and weaknesses, as evidenced by the good use of flashbacks, suspense, rhetoric, stream of consciousness technique, direct speech, idioms, proverbs, strong verbs, adjectives, topic sentences, varied sentence structure, appropriate diction or register for the overriding theme, vivid descriptions and a lot of creativity. The tenses were appropriately applied with uses of ellipsis, transference of learning, good paragraphing, and spelling. In addition, candidates across different centres appeared to understand the tasks that we demanded of them by each question that they chose to interact with.

While these were generally positive observations, areas of weakness were identified in the work that was carried out by the candidates. A good number of centres who struggled to attain some marks, were mainly affected by Section B, to which one could attribute their performance to inappropriate use of language needed for a speech or in some instances simply failing to eliminate errors in their submissions by omitting to proofread their work.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- 1 A few candidates attempted this question, and they were able to demonstrate their understanding of the topic, with good attempts at answering the question. Candidates generally managed to bring out the different forms of sacrifice that one can make. For instance, they talked about selflessness, helping others in different situations and being able to give up something that is of value to you for a good purpose as well as from a religious perspective. There were some Centres, however, where some candidates' responses were noted to be relevant to the question, although they lacked precision of articulation.
- 2 A few Centres tackled this question and for those that did, they managed to bring out the challenging situation. They also went on to elaborate on how they had managed to overcome the challenge. While this was the case, other candidates were able to write very decent stories and yet failed to drive the point home to attract the marks that they deserve.
- 3 The majority of candidates from almost all Centres selected this item and attempted the questions with reasonable understanding. Candidates were generally able to write very convincing accounts of the narrative composition although they tended to be lengthy and at times plagued by a narration of similar story lines that used the same vocabulary as well as a lack of creativity, relevance and precision.
- 4 Candidates who responded to this question were few, but they were able to demonstrate their understanding of the topic very well. They were able to bring out valid points on how a united community can achieve success. However, there were many candidates that also selected this argumentative task but struggled to stay relevant and to present ideas that are fully developed. In some instances, they showed a deficiency of practice in writing this type of composition which is argumentative/informative in nature.

- 5 Candidates generally picked this item in few numbers. The few that managed to argue their stand effectively, mostly agreeing to the notion that expulsion should be abolished as it contributes to a lot of unemployment and subsequently the decline of the country's economy.

Recommendations:

- Candidates ought to be encouraged to avoid using big terms in their writing as most of them often struggle to use them to enhance meaning.
- Candidates ought to be discouraged from writing unnecessarily long scripts which tend to become monotonous and further hamper their ability to effectively communicate their points.
- Punctuations should be utilised to enhance meaning and not to hamper it, since it was evident that some candidates became overzealous in their use and applied them incorrectly.
- Subject-verb agreement ought to be practiced so as to enhance the quality of writing exhibited by the candidates.
- Candidates ought to be assisted on how to approach and write different kinds of compositions as they often make them prone to errors.

Section B

Format

This aspect was fairly well done. Candidates were generally able to write using the correct format, demonstrating a good understanding of how a format ought to be written. However, there were many cases of candidates who used the format of a memorandum while others neglected to state their designation thus losing some marks.

Content

The guidelines were well addressed by most candidates without much struggle. They were able to expand on the points relatively well.

Language

The use of informal register was observed to be quite rampant as the speech tends to encourage spoken "chatty" language. Candidates ended up using words such as 'guys', 'kids' and failed to consider the audience they were addressing.

Recommendations

- Candidates ought to be taught how to address an audience and how to keep it activated throughout the speech. This should become evident in their writing as they develop a better understanding of dealing with different audiences.
- Candidates ought to be encouraged to avoid lengthy speeches which tend to become monotonous.

PAPER 2: SHORT-ANSWER AND STRUCTURED

General Comments

Generally, candidates' performance was similar to that of the 2023 cohort. Even though the paper was accessible to all candidates because subject matter such as: Passage A about water desalination, Passage B about A Spa Day at the Falls and Passage C about A Girl Finding Peace in the Wild, however overall passage C was not accessible to below average candidates. The common mark was 6 out of 15. Only a handful got 10 upwards. A lot of blanks were observed across questions. For 2 marks questions, most got 1 mark. The majority of the candidature year 2024 was able to present their work very well. In addition, not many candidates left blank spaces including the summary.

Comments on Individual Questions

Passage A

- 1 (a) This was a recall question, and it was well done. The candidates were able to lift the answer from the passage.
- (b) This was also a recall question which was somewhat challenging to some candidates because of the word 'main'. The candidates tended to write additional information which was irrelevant
- (c) This was a vocabulary type of question and candidates were able to pick the correct word. Those unable to pick the word 'mega' either gave a wrong word or gave more than one word.
- (d) This was a question that required candidates to use their **own word(s)** and was generally not well done. Candidates were expected to identify the answer from the passage and use their own words to explain the Penal Words. The question was a challenging one for some candidates as a good number of them could not score the two full marks.
- (e) This was a lift type of question where the candidates were to quote of phrase. Some failed to pick the correct quote, others failed to put quotation marks even though the phrase was correct. Others had lengthy responses which failed to follow the rubric of phrase of two words.
- (f) This item tested inference skills based on the picture given. Generally, candidates failed the question as their failed to demonstrate their inferential skills.
- (g) This was a multiple-choice question. The section was fairly done. The vocabulary was simple.
- (h) This was a multiple-choice question, and it was fairly done.
- (i) This was also a multiple-choice question for which candidates did fairly done.

Passage B

- 2 (a) This question was a recall type of item which was generally well attempted by candidates. Those who did not score, picked 'World Heritage Site' or did not understand what apart from meant.
- (b) This was a **vocabulary** type of question. The candidates were supposed to pick the synonym of the phrase **old fashioned** from the passage.
- (c) This question was a **lift** type of item in nature for which candidates were to quote of phrase of four words but show understanding of what the vocabulary in the question is pointing to. Some

failed to pick the correct quote, others failed to put quotation marks even though the phrase was correct

- (d) This was an **Own Word** question where candidates had to give synonym for the words **entice** and **extend**. Most candidates failed to give the synonym for 'entice' but got for 'extend'.
- (e) This was a question of your **own word** with **excellent service** as penal words. Most candidates did well for the word 'excellent' but failed for 'service'.
- (f) This was a **lift** type of question. It was done well as candidates were able to pick the word **rival**.
- (g) This was a **vocabulary** type of question as candidates needed to show understanding of the word unique. It was well done.
- (h) This was an item testing inference based on the picture that was provided. The candidate's performance was poor. The candidates gave the words **cool, sunny, hot, windy** as the atmosphere of the place which shows they interpreted atmosphere as weather.

Passage C

- 3 (a) A vocabulary type of question where candidates had to show understanding Most answered correct
- (b) A vocabulary type of question where candidates were supposed to pick the synonym of the word revelation from the passage. Instead of the word epiphany most candidates wrote the wrong word recant. They also failed to follow the Rubric (one word instead gave many words)
 - (c) An own word type of question and a high order one, not many candidates did well. Some candidates made an incomplete attempt, while others left a blank
 - (d) An own words type of question. Most candidates attempted 'in our minds' and could not get imprint correct.
 - (e) A lift type of question. Candidates gave 3 attempts and did not separate answers correctly.
 - (f) Candidates had the task of identifying where the quotation started and ended. Some students still forgot to put quotation marks and as a result they lost marks. Examples of wrong responses included: wrong phrase / punctuation mark in between words / rarely wrong word order / more than the stipulated number of words
 - (g) A lift type of question. Most candidates scored 1 mark. Answers were not tailored from the sentence, but wholesale picking of the sentence.
 - (h) An inferential type of question that demanded contrast. Majority of the candidates did not do well on this question. The contrast proved to be challenging to candidates. Those who got it correct had an implied contrast, not vivid clear cut.
 - (l) A lift type of question and one of the most scored questions. Some ignored the one-word rubric.
 - (j) This was an item that tested vocabulary on the part of candidates:
 - (i) Not well answered most of the time

- (ii) Wrong attempts
- (iii) Well answered most of the time.
- (iv) The least picked word. Most got it wrong.
- (v) The most evident answer is CALM. Other answers were not common.

General observations made on the vocabulary question

- Some candidates attempted all the words ignoring the rubric.
 - Some used the words in sentences.
 - Verb form/ Noun problem
 - Tense sensitive words were a challenge.
 - Not many candidates surpassed the 7 words limit.
- (k) This was a summary question. The performance was satisfactory as most candidates were able to pick the relevant points. The few candidates who attempted using their own words expressed themselves well. Those who did not score well wrote short summaries.