



**BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL**

**PSLE
PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**SETSWANA COMPOSITION AND LETTER WRITING
2024**

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the Principal Examiner's findings about the 2024 candidates' performance on letter writing and composition tasks. It provides an evaluation of the candidates' work, highlighting both their strong and poor points, giving teachers a useful tool to enhance instruction. It is essential that this report used to identify the areas that require development to better prepare future candidates for these kinds of writing tasks.

GENERAL COMMENTS

In general, the 2024 cohort appears to be significantly better at answering the questions than the one before it. It was determined that the composition and letter were easy to understand and accessible, with the assumption that nearly all students would be able to compose them without any issues. Even though they had to write a formal letter this year, the subject matter was manageable. It is concerning, though, that the same issues that are brought up year after year continue to surface, and this year's performance on communication—especially letter writing, where they have been performing better in prior years—continues dropping significantly.

In comparison to the previous year, most candidates displayed improved performance and quality of work in composition writing. However, some centres continue to exhibit low performance in this area, which raises concerns about the utilization of the feedback provided in this report. As the report is intended to provide teachers with valuable insights into student performance and to help students improve, it is crucial that its findings be fully implemented to maximize its effectiveness and contribute to future candidates' success.

The inability of candidates to distinguish between stating and explaining as specified in the rules is a major issue that continues to exist in both composition and letter writing. Candidates often forget that explaining entails not just stating but also elaborating on or supporting important ideas. Many thus create skeleton art that lacks depth and detail. Instead of discussing a single point in depth, candidates might compose a list of different, unsupported major arguments in a single paragraph. Candidates' capacity to provide facts and arguments in their writing is still hampered by this problem.

The format of both the letter and the essay is another issue. Candidates must follow the specific rules for each writing style. Handwriting is still a major problem; many students struggle to write legibly and clearly, shape letters correctly, or distinguish between capital and lowercase characters. These problems might make the writing difficult to read and lower the standard of the work.

Although some centres have shown significant progress, candidates' overall performance in communication is still inadequate, and this year's problem is made worse by letter writing. However, it is important to recognise the outstanding efforts of a few students from centres who were able to apply the creative criterion. Teaching candidates how to effectively articulate and sequence ideas in their writing must be a top priority going ahead to assist them in creating writings that are cohesive and well-organised. Candidates will be better prepared to generate excellent written work if these skills are prioritised.

COMPOSITION WRITING

Candidates were tasked with writing an essay titled “LETSATSI LE KE NENG KA LEMOGA BOTLHOKWA JWA GO REETSA DIKGAKOLOLO TSA BATSADI” using the provided guidelines to structure their subject matter. Adhering to these guidelines was crucial in demonstrating an understanding of the essay writing process. Additionally, the candidates' communication and

writing skills were expected to be showcased through various aspects of the Setswana language to maintain the reader's interest.

Confinement to the Guidelines

Despite the guidelines being provided to direct the essay's structure, many candidates continued to view them as questions requiring direct responses. This led to narrow and underdeveloped presentations that failed to meet the expected standard. Instead of offering thorough, well-supported ideas, most candidates provided brief, two-sentence responses for each guideline, which does not fulfil the requirements of effective essay writing. It is imperative that candidates strive to enhance their points, demonstrating their mastery of the Setswana language and communication skills to produce engaging and informative essays.

COMMUNICATION 1

Candidates were expected to elaborate on the importance and justification for following elders' advice to show that they understood the essay topic. Candidates were supposed to effectively utilise the Setswana language in order to enlighten and captivate the reader in addition to properly presenting the key topics. This required them to demonstrate their command of language, syntax, and rhetorical strategies, all of which could be used to create an essay that was detailed and persuasive. Candidates could create an engaging written piece that clearly conveys their views and knowledge by combining their language skills with a thorough understanding of the issue at hand.



The following are the ways in which the candidates were expected to address the guideline.

Elaboration of ideas:

Ke ne ke rata go lwa le bana ba bangwe. Selo se, se ne sa felela se dira gore ke ba golafatse mme bangwe ba felela ba tshaba le gone go ya sekoleng. Tiragalo e, ya felela e dira gore batsadi ba mpeye fa fatshe ba nkgalemele le go nkgakolola go togela mokgwa o o sa siamang o. Ke ne ka agela mafoko a bone mosako.

NB:

The learner was expected to construct the topic sentence. In the example above, the topic sentence is, “ke ne ke rata go lwa le bana ba bangwe”

The second sentence which forms an elaboration supports the topic sentence thus, it is:

“Selo se, se ne sa dira gore ke ba golafatse mme bangwe ba felela ba tshaba le gone go ya sekoleng. ”.

Elaboration using examples:

Ke ne ke rata go lwa le bana ba bangwe mo go neng go tlisa mathata a farologaneng jaaka go ba golafatsa le gone go ba tshabisa sekole.

NB:

The topic sentence is “Ke ne ke rata go lwa le bana ba bangwe mo go neng go tlisa mathata a a farologaneng.

Examples

- i) Go golafatsa bana
- ii) Go ba tshabisa sekole.



Observations

- In general, some learners were able to give adequate justifications, whereas others had challenges.
- Several candidates separated their main points from their explanations in different paragraphs, which weakened the organisation of their responses. Teachers should emphasize staying focused on the core topic and providing logical, structured evidence to address this issue.
- Some candidates deviate from the subject at hand, discussing irrelevant issues before getting back to it in the paragraph that follows.
- Even though some candidates tried to explain what had occurred, they were only able to come up with vague words that didn't go into enough detail about any incidence.

It is crucial for candidates to distinguish between stating/mentioning and explaining, as explaining requires more than merely mentioning. A strong response would entail stating the main idea, followed by supporting points which serve to elaborate on the main idea, focusing on the specific incident that prompted the elders' advice and the resulting benefits. Candidates must remember to begin each paragraph with a topic sentence, followed by supporting sentences or examples that further develop the main idea, as demonstrated above. Supporting the main idea is vital for creating coherent and developed paragraphs that enhance the overall structure of the essay. In the context of this essay, it would be beneficial for candidates to focus on specific incidents that prompted the elders' advice, detailing how adhering to their wisdom resulted in positive outcomes.

(a)Mentions the time and place of the incident.

Candidates were expected to indicate the time and place of the incident described in their essays, providing context for their explanations and contributing to the overall coherence of their responses.



Observations

- Most candidates showed that they understood the context by correctly indicating the incident's time and location. However, a small percentage of candidates merely provided the time or location of the incident.
- Several candidates provided general information about the time and place of the incident without specifically connecting it to the event that prompted the elders' advice.

It was evident from the responses that most the candidates demonstrated an overall understanding of the guideline and were able to effectively interpret and respond to it.

(b) Explain an incident that prompted the elders to advice them.

Candidates were required to provide a detailed account of the event that led to the elders' advice.

Observations

- Many of the candidates were able to provide a thorough explanation of the event that led to the elders' counsel.

(c) Explains how they benefited from the elder's advice.

The guideline required candidates to provide a detailed explanation of how they derived benefits from the elders' advice. To meet the requirements of the guideline, candidates needed to select at least one specific benefit of the advice and fully elaborate on its impact, rather than merely listing multiple benefits without providing sufficient detail. This would show that they are aware of the advantages of following the elders' advice and that they can effectively and clearly explain these advantages.

Example

Dikgakololo tsa bagolo di ne tsa nthusa fela thata, ke ne ka simolola go tsaya dithuto tsa me ka tlhwaafalo. Maduo a me kwa sekolong a ne a tokafala le tsone ditlhatlhobo ke feta ka tse ditsididi. Ke ne ka dira go tlala ka diatla.

Observations

- Most candidates were able to provide a thorough justification of how the elders' advice had helped them.
- Some candidates lost a score since they failed to elaborate on the benefit.
- Some of the candidates simply listed the advantages without even trying to choose one and provide a convincing explanation.

NB: As previously mentioned, teachers need to emphasise the difference between stating and explaining. The candidate's inability to explain calls for interventions to assist learners in acquiring the skills of how to elaborate.

(d)Creativity

Show some creativity in their writing.

Creativity is a major challenge for many candidates. Most candidates lose a creative point. Candidates must demonstrate their ability to synthesise knowledge and deliver it in a coherent manner in this area. This entails combining the essay's primary components to create a cohesive work of writing. They were also supposed to combine the essay's primary components to create a coherent work of writing with coherence between and between paragraphs. To ensure that the essay stimulates the reader's interest and maintains a flow of thoughts, it requires the use of a variety of sentences, a diverse language, and creative thinking outside the parameters. In addition, creativity involves the skilled application of language elements including ideophones,



interjective, collective nouns, descriptive words, punctuation, and rich diction/vocabulary for a specific impact. Creating an engaging piece of work also requires the capacity to experiment with Setswana words.

NB: It is imperative that teachers prioritize the development of creativity in writing among learners. To address this pressing need, teachers should integrate creative writing skills into their lesson plans, provide ample opportunities for practice and feedback, and encourage students to experiment with language and explore the possibilities of Setswana in their written work.

COMMAND OF LANGUAGE

This section assesses candidates' grasp of the various grammatical structures and their appropriate usage. The assessment considers the following attributes:

(e) Capitalization and Punctuation

Most of the candidates are performing well in punctuation and capitalisation. They still have the problem of not punctuating the demonstrative, too. Additionally, they keep using commas even when they shouldn't pause; in fact, several of them didn't use commas at all when they should have. This illustrates a need for greater attention to the nuances of punctuation in Setswana and effective communication

(f) Descriptive vocabulary

To improve their essay, candidates must include descriptive words and phrases, or both. These should be exceptional words or phrases that paint a clear image of the subject matter. The reader should be able to visualise what has been described because to these impressions.

Examples

Ke ne ke tsamaya le basimane ba maepantlo masigo kwa maitisong.
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Examples of language aspects that can be used as descriptive vocabulary.

Language aspects	Example
Collective nouns	Matlakana a bana Boidiidi jwa batho Maphatšhaphatšha a metsi.
Ideophones (maetsisi)	Palakata! Tu! Thu! Pote! Thi! Phatsi!
Assonance(poeletso medumo)	Matsetseleko, magasisigasi, tshetlhatshetlha

(g)Figurative language

To write an exceptional essay, candidates must employ figurative language in the right context.

This involves using idioms, proverbs, and poetic devices like personification, metaphor, and simile appropriately. These can give the essay more depth, emotion, and beauty. By using metaphorical language to create a rich, emotive composition, candidates can set their writing apart from more simple and straightforward responses.

Observations

Many candidates lost out on a great chance to express their originality by not using metaphorical language in their essays. Candidates who tried to use proverbs and idioms misused them, which shows how crucial it is to fully comprehend and apply these components appropriately.



NB: To help candidates better understand and use these skills in their writing, teachers should include figurative language in their lesson plans and teach in context. A greater comprehension of the Setswana language and its expressive possibilities may result from this method.

(h)Compound and complex sentences

Candidates continue to struggle with using complex and compound sentences in their writing, just as they did in prior years.

Observations

- Some candidates write brief, simple sentences.
- Overuse of conjunctions, with some candidates using more than one conjunction in a single long sentence.
- Incorrect use of both conjunctions and commas to construct compound sentences, leading to grammatical errors.
- Some candidates tend to produce run-on sentences, which force them to employ many conjunctives to maintain clarity and cohesion.
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CONTENT MANAGEMENT 1

This section's goal is to determine if candidates have mastered the ability to take every aspect of composition writing and combine them to create a coherent work of writing. The following elements are considered when assessing the candidates' integration of these skills:

(i) Coherence of ideas within the paragraphs

It is crucial to remember that paragraphs must be written according to the format. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence and supporting ideas since it is expected that each paragraph will address a single idea that has been brought up. It is not appropriate to separate the topic sentence



from the supporting sentence. To guarantee that candidates write well-structured, cohesive essays, it is vital to stress the significance of this organisation in effective writing.

Paragraph = Topic sentence + supporting sentences

Batsadi ba me ba ne ba nkgakolola ka bodiphatsa jwa go tsamaya masigo. E ne e re bosigo batsadi ba sena go isa marapo go beng, nna le tsala ya me Tumelo re bo re ngwega re ya maitisong. Fa re tsena kwa maitisong, re ne re inaakanya le dilo tse di sa tlhamalalang jaaka go itshiela dinotagi le go goga metsoko.

Topic sentence = Batsadi ba me ba ne ba nkgakolola ka bodiphatsa jwa go tsamaya masigo

Supporting sentences = - nna le tsala ya me Tumelo re bo re ngwega re ya maitisong.

- Fa re tsena kwa maitisong, re ne re inaakanya le dilo tse di sa tlhamalalang

Observations

In comparison to previous years, there was a notable improvement in the coherence of candidates' paragraphs, although some learners still struggled with this aspect of writing. While many were able to create cohesive paragraphs, there remained several candidates who produced fragmented ideas that lacked connection and logical flow. In addition, lengthy sentences continued to be present in some essays, reflecting a need for further instruction on sentence structure and organization.

(j)Introduction and conclusion

A strong introduction is essential for setting the scene for the rest of the essay. While some candidates wrote only a single sentence or paragraph as an introduction, this was deemed



acceptable. The conclusion, on the other hand, should provide a summary or thoughtful reflection on the key points of the essay. This helps to provide closure and reinforce the main ideas for the reader, as well as demonstrate the candidate's ability to integrate information and draw meaningful insights from their writing.

Observations

Generally, most candidates wrote strong introductions and conclusions, setting a solid foundation for their essays and ending them on a clear, brief note. This reflects an overall understanding of the importance of these components in the structure of an essay and the ability to effectively frame and summarize their main ideas.

LETTER WRITING

For this task, candidates were expected to write a formal letter to the School Head, informing them about instances of bullying or maltreatment among students and expressing a desire to assist the victims. The topic was appropriate for their level and easy to understand because bullying is a common issue encountered by students and is addressed in Guidance and Counselling lessons. However, the letter format proved challenging for some candidates, as reflected in the following observations:

CONTENT MANAGEMENT 2

(a)Address and date

Candidates were required to include a correctly formatted address and date at the start of their letter, ensuring that the date was written in Setswana.

Observations:

Most candidates were successful in formatting the address and date correctly. However, several candidates lost marks for this criterion due to errors such as punctuation mistakes in the address,

the absence of title case, and failure to include the Department in the recipient's address. These mistakes reflect a need for greater attention to detail when formatting formal letters in Setswana.

The following are examples of incorrectly formatted addresses from candidates' responses:

Mogokgo wa sekolo	Mogokgo
P O Box 4	Setlhareng Primary School
Gaborone	P o Box 45
	Serowe

Mogokgo
Letlhabile Primary School
P O Box 4
Lentswethebe

(b)Opening and closing salutations:

For the opening salutation, candidates were required to address the recipient as 'Rra/Mma' and to include a line break after the recipient's address.

Opening salutation



Although most candidates correctly used the opening salutation, some made errors such as writing it as follows:

- a) Rre/Mme b) Mma/Rra

Closing salutation

The closing salutation was “**Ka boikokobetso**” The candidates were expected to write it as follows:

Ka boikokobetso

Lesego Tumediso

The following errors were identified in some candidates' writing:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| i) | Ke le | ii) Ka boikokobetso | iii) Ka boikokobetso |
| | Lesego Tumediso | Lesego | Lesego Tumediso. |

- i) Ka boikokobetso
- LESEGO TUMEDISO

- In some cases, candidates punctuated the closing salutation with full stops, rather than omitting punctuation, as required.
- After the final sentence, a few candidates skipped two lines.

If a learner chooses to cancel a line of writing in their formal letter, they should be encouraged to rewrite the salutation on the same line as the cancellation, without skipping any lines. Skipping



lines in this scenario could result in a mark being deducted, as it does not conform to the appropriate formatting for a formal letter.

NB: It's important to remember that the salutations and address are rather simple components of a formal letter, so candidates shouldn't have any trouble getting them right. However, it is concerning that some candidates made mistakes in these areas, as it implies that they might not fully understand Setswana's formal letter writing rules. This emphasises how crucial it is to go over and practise these abilities in the classroom.

COMMUNICATION 2

Candidates are expected to show that they comprehend the subject under this profile. They are supposed to discuss the subject in a direct, conversational style that avoids assuming or speculating.

(c) Mentioning the learners who maltreat/ bully others.

Candidates were required to provide specific and detailed examples of learners engaging in bullying or maltreatment, whether it was directed at peers, younger classmates, seniors, or carried out by groups or gangs. This aspect of the criterion evaluated the candidates' capacity to understand and accurately describe instances of bullying or maltreatment, which served as the basis for their proposed solutions and recommendations in later parts of the essay.

Observations

Most candidates successfully identified the individuals or groups responsible for bullying and maltreatment, earning them marks for this part of the criterion. This shows that most candidates had a solid understanding of the types of bullying behaviours and the individuals involved in perpetrating them, allowing them to effectively address the problem and propose solutions.

(d) Explaining what they intend to do to assist/ help the victims.

Candidates had to give detailed information about the strategies or plans they would use to assist those who have been bullied or mistreated. Candidates were asked to thoroughly explain at least one of the techniques they specified, using appropriate ideas and examples to support the viability and effectiveness of their selected strategy.

EXAMPLES 1: Explaining main idea with ideas/supporting points:

Ke eletsa go ka biletswa batsadi ba bone kwa sekolong. Mo bokopanong jo, batsadi ba ka lemotshiwa ka boitsholo jo bo sa amogelesegeng jwa bana ba bone. Bana ba supile maitsholo a a sa siamnang a go betsa bana ba bangwe, go ba tseela ditsabone le go kgagpola dibuka tsa ba bangwe.

Ntlha ya botlhokwa:

Ke eletsa go ka biletswa batsadi ba bone kwa sekolong.

Katoloso ka mogopolo:

- Mo bokopanong jo, batsadi ba ka lemotshiwa ka boitsholo jo bo sa amogelesegeng jwa bana ba bone.
- Bana ba supile maitsholo a a sa siamnang a go betsa bana ba bangwe, go ba tseela ditsabone le go kgagpola dibuka tsa ba bangwe

EXAMPLE 2: explaining main idea with examples

Ke eletsa gore go ka bidiwa badiri ba maphata a a farologaneng jaaka ba sepodise, bokaedi le bogakolodi go tla go gakolola bana ba, ka maitsholo a a sa amogelesegeng.



Observations:

Even in this case, candidates had mistakes, just like in composition writing. They were able to develop strategies or plans to assist the victims of bullying and were able to provide more detail about their ideas.

(e)State how their assistance will improve the situation:

Candidates were required to explain how the help provided would make the current condition of affairs better.

Observations:

Numerous candidates were able to provide clear answers to the question. Some, however, made claims they believed would be helpful of their recommended assistance, which lacked specificity and logic supported by facts. This suggests that applicants should improve their ability to write effectively and logically.

COMMAND OF LANGUAGE

In addition to demonstrating their understanding of the subject matter, candidates were assessed on their ability to use various aspects of the Setswana language effectively. This involved proper use of tenses, adherence to the appropriate register for the context, accurate spelling and orthography, and a diverse range of sentence openings. These elements were evaluated to determine the candidates' proficiency in written Setswana and their skill in crafting a well-rounded and engaging essay.

f) Tense

There was a notable improvement in the candidates' ability to use the correct tense. It was expected that candidates should consistently apply the appropriate tense throughout their writing, ensuring that it is consistent with the context of the topic. Most candidates demonstrated accurate

and appropriate use of tense, reflecting an overall increase in their mastery of this aspect of language.

g) Register:

Candidates had to choose language appropriate for the task and utilise Setswana consistently throughout the essay, particularly when naming subjects, to register. Since foul or vulgar language is not appropriate for professional, academic writing, it was not allowed. Following the customs of Setswana culture and society, this criterion placed a strong emphasis on the value of appropriate etiquette and decency in written communication.

Observations

In terms of register, there was a significant improvement in candidates' performance. Almost all candidates used proper language, adhering to the requirements of formal, academic writing and demonstrating an understanding of the appropriateness of Setswana in all aspects of their written work. This suggests that candidates are becoming more aware of the importance of choosing language that aligns with the expectations and norms of written communication in a Setswana context.

(h) Spelling

Despite improvements in some areas of language usage, many candidates continue to lose marks due to spelling errors. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of proofreading to candidates, as a simple review of their work can help them identify and correct errors. These mistakes, which appear to be a result of carelessness or a lack of attention to detail, often indicate that candidates do not thoroughly review their work before submission. Encouraging candidates to develop a habit

of proofreading can help them improve their spelling accuracy and thereby strengthen their written work.

(i) Orthography

Numerous candidates still have trouble telling the difference between conjunctive and disjunctive word forms, despite continuous efforts to resolve this problem. To solve this issue, candidates need to be trained to correctly identify the correct spelling by considering the words' pronunciation and the related sounds (flh/g, tlh, and th/tlh). Teachers should prioritize instruction on correct orthography, as regional dialectal differences have been shown to influence vocabulary usage, potentially leading to mistakes in written work.

(j) Sentence opening

There was a notable improvement in the use of varied sentence openings by the candidates, reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of diverse sentence structures. To sustain this progress, candidates should be exposed to a wide range of sentence openings in their learning experiences, helping them to develop the habit of using different structures and thus avoid repetition or monotony in their writing.

CONCLUSION

Teachers and centers are strongly encouraged to carefully review the feedback provided in this report, paying special attention to the areas of creativity, elaboration of guidelines, and correct use of formal letter format and salutations. These aspects are vital in showcasing a candidate's competence in communication and creative writing. By considering and implementing these suggestions in their teaching and learning practices, teachers can help their students to significantly enhance their written work and thereby improve their overall performance in examinations.