Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2020

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<u>Introduction</u>

For obvious reasons, there were not nearly as many candidates as usual for this year's exam, so there is not the usual solid weight of statistical evidence to back up what one may 'feel' about how easy/difficult particular questions were. There were, however, clear signs during marking of which questions candidates tended to struggle with, either in terms of unknown vocabulary or in 'converting' what they heard into words that answered the question.

<u>Question 1: A love of football</u>
Despite several of the items needing the heard language to be processed, rather than simply recalled, candidates largely performed well in this question.

<u>Question 2: Memories of childhood</u>
Whilst the context of the question was easy enough to grasp, there was a fair amount that needed to be inferred from the dialogue. Candidates all managed to sift out the distractors with ease, only 2iii proving slightly more challenging.

<u>Question 3: An exchange trip</u>
This crossover question, whilst again probably a familiar setting, proved problematic for a good number of candidates. Whilst most successfully picked out the key phrase 更快 and chose F as a correct answer, many thoughts there were lessons every day, despite the text clearly saying 星期天我们没有课. Option B was the correct answer that was most often not identified from the information given about each week of the trip.

<u>Question 4: Sports</u>
The majority of candidates gained full marks in this question, successfully understanding the hardest elements of this question, the inferences about what makes a sport competitive (wanting to be fastest, trying to be champion, feeling pressure). A few seemed unfamiliar with the term 无聊, whilst others appeared not to have understood the task and used adjectives that were none of the four given.

<u>Question 5: A charitable institution</u>
With this question, the exam moves into the Higher paper 'proper', yet candidates all dealt with this question well, picking out the information that they needed to make the right choice of answer.

<u>Question 6: Check-in</u>
Nearly all candidates gained full marks on this question. It was really only part (a) that oddly caused difficulty; the key to the correct answer was the word 后天, and while this might not be as familiar a word as 明天, the fact that he does not say he is leaving Hong Kong <u>tomorrow</u> would hopefully have guided the candidates towards making a reasonable guess that 后天 is the day after tomorrow; it has, after all, to be in the future!

<u>Question 7: Exam season</u>
Despite this question being a monologue and its featuring several words not on the vocabulary list, candidates gave better answers than might have been expected. Of course, for most taking the exam it would have been a familiar experience and something they could identify with (even if this was talking about A levels). Marks were commonly lost in (b) where graduation was mentioned, (c) where answers often said 'too late' as opposed to the correct 'too slow', and (e) as answers said Jack was worried about his friends' results, as opposed to *asking about* their results.

<u>Question 8: Work experience</u>

Although fewer school students actually do work experience as part of their school career now, candidates generally performed well on this multiple-choice question. This was despite often having to take in a lot of information and sort through it to find the correct option. By this stage of the Higher paper, candidates can expect to have fewer more straightforward recall questions. Item (a) (i) was the only question that focussed on a single word (兽医), but even here candidates were not expected to be familiar with this term, but rather infer it from the clues ('pets') given elsewhere. It was part (b)(ii) that proved most difficult, perhaps because candidates did not pick up the key word 志愿者, which indicated that they were working for nothing.

Question 9: Making her mark
Candidates on the whole performed well on this question, even recognising or working out the meaning of words such as 空姐. Whilst there were some items which were specifically to do with the airline world, much of the context was clearly familiar to most. Many candidates gained more marks in Part (a) than Part (b), mainly because they failed to respond in terms of the question asked: in (iii), for example, a good number simply translated what they heard ('I go to the airport hotel to rest and then come back') rather than answer the question in terms of the opportunities she had to sightsee (by inference, none). Similarly, the answer 'spending time with her daughter' as a response to (iv), when read together with the question, makes the speaker sound quite heartless! Lastly, question (v) (What is her dream now?) was asking the candidates to understand how the word 机长 is built up of elements that are hopefully familiar from elsewhere (probably 飞机 and 校长); whilst there was considerable degree of language process needed here, many said that she was hoping to be a pilot which, given all that had come before, could not have been the correct answer.

Question 10: A very 'green' school
This was a familiar setting (school) but the topic (using solar energy) is a relatively difficult one, involving high-level vocabulary. However, the task itself did not need every word to be understood, and the task format (choosing 2 out of 5 statements) is such that enough can usually be grasped to eliminate the incorrect statements. Most candidates did indeed gain at least 3 marks (out of 4) in this question.