

1 General comments

This year, 17 centres entered 491 candidates for this examination. There are still many centres which have entered candidates on the First Language English Level, who should in fact be entered on the Second Language English Level. That being said, one does realise, that in most cases, these entries are made on the insistence of the school's management and/or the parents. Teachers are to be vigilant and make sure that candidates, who they enter for this examination, are capable and prepared for this level of English.

The vast majority of the candidates revealed a mature attitude in their writing. Most of the candidates who chose to write narrative essays were able to apply their linguistic devices appropriately, and in so doing, created beautiful imagery. Included is an appealing essay as an example. This will, of course, stand them in good stead for the AS syllabus. Teachers are to please remind candidates not to plagiarise, as there were some narrations taken from Sci-Fi films and novels, which resulted in very low marks. Many centres had obviously covered some of the topics; for example the pros and cons of solar energy in Namibia and the use of cell phones in schools, which allowed candidates to gain marks for content. However, the structuring of the argumentative essays still remains an issue. Unless candidates are able to present and substantiate arguments well, they should not choose these topics. Once again, the choice of question played a vital role in the final result.

Teachers are encouraged to continue revising and practising all the essay formats throughout the year to ensure that candidates are able to be at ease when choosing a topic. The proof is in the pudding, as there has been a vast improvement in the general essay structures, for which the teachers are to be congratulated. A concise introduction followed by well-structured body paragraphs which are cohesively linked to one another and a conclusive final paragraph have ensured higher results. Unfortunately, there are still some candidates who write an essay within two lengthy paragraphs which include a number of issues unrelated to one another.

2. Comments to Individual Questions

1. The Minister of Education, Arts and Culture, recently supported the idea that cell phones might be used for learning in Namibian schools. What do you think?

Many candidates chose this topic as they thought they had many points to discuss to validate the motion. Unfortunately, not all the candidates were able to balance the arguments well. Substantiation remains an issue and needs facts and statistics to persuade and inform the audience. Candidates should plan this type of essay carefully before writing it.

2. Write a narrative in which you were left disillusioned or disappointed.

This was one of the favourite choices. Many candidates wrote from their experiences which varied from the mundane to the most emotional responses which included school work, their parents, friends and themselves – some even ending tragically! Those who were able to apply their literary devices correctly, gained higher results as they were able to appeal to the reader's pathos and ethos.

3. Give a detailed account or description of the town you live in and the way its development has affected the environment.

Not many candidates chose this topic. The majority who did, chose to describe Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. Many adjectival phrases were applied to create various forms of imagery which appealed to the audiences' pathos. Sadly, only a few candidates were able to incorporate the way humans' needs have impacted the surrounding environment- be it negatively or positively.

4. "Experience is an essential ingredient of winning in sport." Discuss.

Twelve candidates chose this topic. They were all able to incorporate jargon into their discussions which made their writing more convincing. Again, not many candidates were able to fully evaluate the quotation. Soccer, netball and hockey were sports included to answer this topic.

5. Begin a narrative with the words, “As I opened my eyes, I tried to decipher what the cause of the tingling sensation on my chest was, only to find ...”

This was another popular topic which included pythons, spiders, cats, scorpions, people and nails. Unfortunately, some candidates did not follow the instruction to “Begin the narrative ..” which resulted in a loss of valuable marks.

6. “A creative hobby in the arts is the best way to relieve stress.” Discuss.

Candidates who chose this topic included dancing, the culinary arts, fine arts and crafts. Most of these essays were personal responses to today’s stressful lifestyles. A number of effective examples were incorporated into well-developed paragraphs. Unfortunately, there were a few candidates who randomly listed hobbies and discussed them superficially.

7. Describe a situation in which school spirit drew you and your schoolmates closer.

Only twenty candidates chose this topic. Farewells, bonding trips to Rock Lodge and Forty Days were some of the events included in these responses. A variety of imagery was created in a few essays; particularly a Forty Days essay which included grade eight students.

Candidates’ essays, which had an overpowering narrative style were penalised by one band.

8. What are the pros and cons for solar energy in Namibia?

A large group of candidates chose this controversial topic and seemed confident in their responses. Many students used personal responses to substantiate their points. Not all the candidates were able to balance the pros and the cons in the essays’ development.

Very few candidates were able to express their opinion clearly creating ambiguous introductions and conclusions.

9. Carefully look at the photograph and describe the emotions that rain evokes within a Namibian’s soul.

Forty candidates chose this topic. There were some excellent descriptions which proves that personal experience is an essential ingredient when choosing an essay topic. A particular description included an extended metaphor and a lesson which humans should take from nature.

3. Positive Suggestions To Teachers

Once again teachers are to be congratulated on their efforts this year and are encouraged to continue amidst the awful challenges, we face, regarding the COVID -19 pandemic.

Firstly, the candidates should be reminded to number their choices clearly and topic correctly, as a heading, to avoid any ambiguity.

The planning of an essay is of the essence. The topic should be scrutinised and evaluated before the planning begins. Depending on the format, candidates should use one idea, which should be developed properly throughout the essay and not have haphazard ideas discussed superficially. Cohesion is important: using linking words between paragraphs as well as within paragraphs assists in the progression of a plot or ideas.

The structure of the argumentative and discursive essays is another vitally important aspect: A clear introduction is needed which clarifies the understanding of the question and a possible opinion depending on the type of essay requested. The body paragraphs need to follow a point or topic sentence, an elaboration thereof, an example and a link to the question. Each of these paragraphs needs to be connected by using linking words to enhance the cohesiveness of the essay. A conclusive paragraph should begin with the linking words “In conclusion,” followed by a summary of the topic.

Sentence structure is essential as complex sentences create ambiguity. There should be a variation of compound and simple sentences to create an impact. Simple sentences should also be used to draw the reader’s attention to specific issues, whilst complex sentences should be used to convey information and the flow of the storyline.

Grammatical issues include:

Colloquial and foul language should be avoided. The correct use of the apostrophe, concord, literary and grammatical devices as well as the use of idiomatic expressions are important in creating an effective essay.

The inclusion of articles, irregular verbs and tenses are still in need of attention.

Punctuation:

Correct punctuation is used in a carelessly; particularly the use of a capital I as a personal pronoun. The omission of full stops is another concern.

Spelling:

Discipline, benefits, government, a lot, cannot, accommodate, grateful, definitely, opportunity, disappoint, accident, surprise and received.

Commonly confused words:

Practise vs practice, except vs accept, weather vs whether, dessert vs desert, spent vs spend, quiet vs quite, its vs it's, principal vs principle, stationery vs stationary, laying vs lying, every day vs everyday, where vs were, too vs to, this and that.

Overused words and colloquial expressions to be avoided:

Nice, this, like, got, basically, kids, wanna, okay. "You know like your insides are just like ..."