

**GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2014**

**SCRIPT ANALYSIS**

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## GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2014: SCRIPT ANALYSIS

### 1.0 METHODOLOGY

A sample of 90 scripts was provided by Edexcel, comprising 30 scripts each at grade A, C and F. It is worth noting that a significant number of F grade examination scripts had no writing response at all. Of the original random selection of 30 F grade scripts allocated to this study, 12 (40%) had no writing response, and further F grade writing samples had to be sought. Candidates who do not attempt the writing question at all put themselves at a serious disadvantage, and it seems likely that candidates at the lower-attaining end of the spectrum may have a particular problem managing their timing to allow sufficient time to attempt the writing question.

It is important to note that the designation of grade is based on the overall mark awarded: performance might not necessarily be consistent across all sections of a paper, with reading or writing contributing more marks in any specific script. Individual quotations from students' responses may not necessarily exemplify the overall grade awarded.

The methodology used in this analysis was a modification of the methodology used for two previous studies (QCA 1999; Myhill 2008) which will permit some comparison of outcomes. For the sentence level syntactic analysis, a sub-sample of 100 words was used to allow for a fine-grained analysis of syntactical and sentence level features. To avoid any bias caused by greater attentiveness at the start, the sample was taken further into the text wherever possible. The counting of the 100 words began at the first sentence which started after the 30<sup>th</sup> word of the script. A word was indicated by a space before and after, even if the writer's word division is wrong (e.g. *foot ball* would count as two words if written with a space.) With some F grade scripts, they were so short that starting after the 30<sup>th</sup> word did not give 100 words. In these cases, the 100 words were taken by counting back from the end, but still starting at the beginning of a sentence. Some F grade texts were less than 100 words: the whole of these texts were coded. For the analysis of textual organisation, the whole text was used.

The syntactic analysis combined frequency counts of predetermined linguistic features with the capturing of qualitative examples, which provided exemplification of how the feature was used, and allowed for further qualitative analysis of differences in usage. The features counted are outlined below.

Sentence and Clause Features	Sentence Openings
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> Subject : Noun Phrase
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of words in shortest sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Subject: pronoun
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of words in longest sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverb
<input type="checkbox"/> Minor sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial: prepositional phrase
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of clauses	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial: Non-finite clause
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of finite lexical verbs	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial: Finite subordinate clause
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of finite auxiliary verbs	<input type="checkbox"/> Verb
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of finite subordinate clauses	
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of coordinate clauses	
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-finite infinitive clause	
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-finite present participle clause	
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-finite past participle clause	

Syntactical structures	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Subject Verb inversions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Noun phrases: pre-modified
<input type="checkbox"/>	Noun phrases: post-modified
<input type="checkbox"/>	Length of longest noun phrase

Table 1: showing the linguistic features analysed at sentence level

Coders used a coding frame to capture data which were then entered into a purpose-designed Access database.

The analysis of text organisation was qualitative, looking at how the openings and closure of texts framed the piece, at how paragraphs supported the overall structure of the text, and how effective paragraph shaping was. In addition, the analysis considered whether the writing was appropriate to the purpose, audience and genre of the examination writing task.

## 2.0 SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Sentence length

Most published written texts are characterised by sentences which vary in length. This variety serves two rhetorical or compositional purposes. Firstly, texts composed dominantly of sentences of very similar length tend to read rather monotonously, with an absence of textual rhythm or emphasis. Altering the length of sentences, for example, by juxtaposing a long sentence with a short sentence, or by repeating two or three short sentences sequentially helps to establish a rhythm to the text. As Perera (1984:187) noted '*lack of variety in sentence patterns is not necessarily evident in oral language because the speaker is able to vary the rhythm, speed and volume of delivery and to place the intonation nucleus anywhere in the clause. In writing, however, these paralinguistic and prosodic features are absent, so monotony of grammatical structure is thrown into prominence*'. Of course, variety in sentence length is only one aspect of this, as other syntactical choices within the sentence, such as the use of the passive, subject-verb inversions, and beginning sentences with a structure other than the subject all contribute to establishing a textual rhythm. Secondly, sentence length can be used for specific rhetorical effects, such as a short sentence to emphasise a key point, or draw attention to a dramatic moment; or a sequence of short sentences to create pace in a narrative; or a long sentence to express a complex argument. Minor sentences (i.e. a sentence without a finite verb) are usually short and are also characteristic of more crafted writing.

The analysis of the GCSE scripts shows that there are substantive differences at different grade levels in sentence length and the use of minor sentences (Table 2).

Mean number of: (per 100 words)		Sentences	Words in shortest sentence	Words in longest sentence	Range between shortest and longest	Minor sentences
GRADE	A	4.9	10.2	32.7	22.5	0.43
	C	6.1	8.8	26.8	18.0	0.47
	F	3.4	6.8	21.8	15.0	0.13

Table 2: showing the analysis of sentence length

F grade candidates write generally longer sentences, as evidenced by the fewer number of sentences per 100 words in their scripts, but it is A grade writers whose longest sentence is longer than those for grades C and F.

The range between the shortest sentence and longest sentence decreases from A, through C, to F indicating that F grade writers have the least variety in sentence length, whilst A grade writers have the most. Moreover, 13% of the longest sentences at grade F were judged to have confused expression, whilst none did so at A and C grades. Minor sentences are significantly more likely to be used at grades A and C, than at F.

These statistical patterns relate to the effectiveness of the writing. The qualitative analysis shows that both A and C grade writers create textual rhythm through varying the length of sentences, and they are able to use short sentences to draw attention to information, whereas F grade writers tend towards texts with more sentences of a similar length and less evidence of choice of a short sentence for an effect. The two texts below exemplify this.

*It is not too late. If you were all to cycle to school or into town you would do your bit in saving the planet. Having a bike will also give you so much more freedom as you will not have to rely on your parents giving lifts to your friends. There are also health benefits that will allow you to get your 'summer body' that you have always wanted. Did you know that a recent survey done by Dr Jones showed that doing regular exercise which includes cycling will increase your life expectancy by around 8 years and our quality of life and general happiness will improve? This is because your body releases feel-good hormones when you exercise. [A grade candidate]*

*You have to make sure that your bike is properly fixed up. Make sure that you are wearing a helmet and have lights so that you can see at night. If you are going somewhere that you know you can walk to walk there to keep healthy. [F grade candidate]*

Sentences in the A grade paragraph vary from 5 words to 38 words, and the shortest sentence, *It is not too late* is emphatic, opening the paragraph and setting a frame of reference for the rest of the paragraph. The longest sentence provides elaborating information as a warrant for the claim in the previous sentence that cycling has health benefits. In contrast, the F grade paragraph contains three sentences of broadly similar length (12, 18 and 17 words respectively) and there is no obvious reason for the shorter or longer sentences to be shorter or longer. Reading the two paragraphs aloud makes very clear the different emphases and rhythmic qualities of these two texts.

Looking more closely at the shortest sentence in each script analysed, it is clear that none of the F grade shortest sentences appear to serve any rhetorical purpose in their texts: they are simply shorter relative to the rest of the texts. But at C and A grade the picture is different. The short sentences are much more strongly linked to a rhetorical effect: they include rhetorical questions and tag questions which show a strong audience awareness, and short sentences which make a clear statement or emphasise a point. Tentatively, the qualitative analysis suggests that C grade writers are using rhetorical questions (e.g. *Why do you care so much about a body that isn't yours?* and *Why should we keep fit?*) and tag questions (e.g. *Do you?* and *Doesn't it?*) rather more than they are using short sentences for emphasis. At A grade, whilst the use of rhetorical and tag questions is evident, there is more use of sentences which pithily summarise a key point (e.g. *Cycling is a great form of exercise.*) or emphasise a point: one writer chose to adopt the standpoint of an old woman in hospital reflecting on the violence in the world and drew attention to her age and perspective through a short sentence – *I am ninety years old*. The minor sentences serve similar purposes and sometimes include implied imperatives for action (e.g. *Now!* [A] or *Yes.* [C]). In one A grade script a paragraph opens with a minor

sentence, repeating the same word, then leading into to a substantive point: *Walking, walking, walking. It's got a bad reputation...*

The longer sentences in these scripts tend to be those which articulate an argument, or which provide elaborating information and evidence for an argument previously made. Here the important distinction is that writers are increasingly able to manage or control the expression of complex or multiple ideas within one sentence. As noted earlier, 13% of the longest sentences in F grade scripts were confused or grammatically problematic. This included sentences where word omissions or indecipherable words hindered comprehension, and it also included sentences where the writer has not expressed his or her point clearly:

*I think to start off by keeping Everyone safe on line, we should make sure every one has to put there passport information be yes [?] you can used anything like facebook, Bebo, twitter.*

*Teenagers walking woud be much more helpful and much more energizing especially if you do alot of sports because all the time your spending on a bus could walk it all the way.*

*I am writting to you to day to make your local newspaper safer and less violent because the types of violence in our society is redicallise you should do something about it.*

These writers appear to struggle to articulate their ideas within the sentence and they may be composing the sentence as they write, starting with an idea, and then adding to it as the sentence develops. It also seems to be closer to the patterns of oral language, than writing. This chimes with Bereiter and Scardamalia's concept of 'knowledge-telling' (1987), where ideas are developed in a linear, chained fashion with little overarching shaping or craftedness. More advanced writers are 'knowledge-transforming'; that is, they take an idea but they shape it within a sentence or text to maximise its communicative or rhetorical efficacy. Greater confidence in this kind of management or transformation of an idea is evident in A grade scripts:

*You could become fitter and healthier in no time at all and it could mean loosing that small bit of weight that will make you feel more confident and comfortable in your own body.*

*With levels of obesity and fossil fuels rising, damaging us – and our planet – I see it as only inevitable that we as a nation (possibly as a world-wide population) will convert to cycling and walking to improve our health and well-being.*

*It is also a well known fact that 3 out of 5 of those who commit violent crimes, such as murder or armed robbery, are those either unemployed or who currently claim benefits.*

The control of ideas in longer sentences draws not only on well-selected syntactical structures but also on effective use of punctuation. It is noticeable that many of the F grade scripts are bare of internal sentence punctuation and this contributes to the challenges of clear articulation. Even at A grade, however, there is scope to strengthen candidates' use of punctuation to support clarity in long sentences. The sentence below, from an A grade script, reveals uncertainty in how to use punctuation to manage the information in the sentence.

*Walking and cycling are, without a shadow of a doubt, the best way to get around. Whether it's to see friends or pop to the shops; even going to and from school.*

The writer uses parenthetical commas effectively to demarcate an authorial aside, but then prematurely ends the sentence with a full stop, where a comma, or possibly a dash, would have been more appropriate. The use of the semi-colon for the final clause is also inappropriate.

## 2.2 Clauses

This element of the analysis considers the clause types used in the 100 word sample, and illuminates both how information is connected within the sentence and how it is elaborated. The results at grade F are inconsistent with the previous studies: the results here (Table 3) suggest that F grade writers have less heavily clausal sentences with fewer finite verbs (e.g. *cycles* instead of *to cycle*), and less use of subordination (e.g. *when the light turned red, she stopped cycling*) and co-ordination (e.g. *the light turned red and she stopped cycling*), whereas the earlier studies indicated the opposite. This may be a consequence of the number of F grade scripts which were not 100 words long in total, thus reducing the frequency counts in any category. However, the relative pattern of F grade writers using more subordination than co-ordination is consistent with earlier studies, and confirms that even though these writers are less successful in their writing, developmentally they have moved beyond the pattern of young writers to use more co-ordination than subordination. The results here for A and C grade mirror closely those of the earlier studies. C grade writers make greater use of finite clauses (e.g. *commuters feel healthier*) than A grade writers. In contrast, the analysis of the use of non-finite clauses (e.g. *commuters feel healthier, using alternative transport methods*) reverses the pattern of usage between A and C grade writers, with A grade writers using non-finite clauses more frequently, and F grade writers making very little use of non-finite clauses at all, even taking into account the statistical effect of the scripts shorter than 100 words. These results imply that A grade writers make different choices about how to express ideas at sentence level: they may use more simple sentences; they may elaborate information within the sentence more than writers at lower grades; and they may express information more economically through non-finite structures than through more verbally lengthy finite structures.

Mean number of: (per 100 words)		Clauses	Finite verbs	Finite subordinate clauses	Co-ordinated clauses	Infinitive non-finite clauses	Present participle non-finite clauses	Past participle non-finite clauses
GRADE	A	16.83	11.10	4.83	2.13	3.07	2.20	0.40
	C	18.40	12.97	5.37	2.53	2.97	2.03	0.17
	F	10.67	8.03	3.90	1.43	1.27	0.93	0.00

Table 3: showing the analysis of clause types

The five sentences below illustrate some of the different ways in which writers at the different grade levels use finite and non-finite clauses to convey ideas (the non-finite clauses are underlined for ease of reference):

*This would firstly decrease crime rates as people would know there was a higher risk of getting caught, and secondly, allow our people to feel safer when leaving the house. [A grade candidate]*

*I believe that more should be done, highlighting problems, and issuing solutions. [A grade candidate]*

*The workshops will most likely inform innocent children about the dangers of getting into gangs so that we can help prevent the level of crime.* [C grade candidate]

*Walking and cycling to school will make you feel alot better as it will wake you up and get you started for the day.* [C grade candidate]

*I think more police need to be out there so they can stop and search people so that you can catch more people with knife, drug.* [F grade candidate]

The two sentences from A grade scripts exemplify how non-finite clauses can be used to communicate economically and effectively. Wherever there is a non-finite clause, a longer finite clause could have been used, making for a more verbally ‘wordy’ way of expression (e.g. The second sentence above could have been written thus: *I believe that more should be done so that problems are highlighted and so that solutions can be issued*). In the C script sentences, although there is an example of a non-finite clause, choices could have been made to reduce other finite clauses to non-finite clauses to express the ideas more concisely. The F grade script is more obviously less precise in its expression, with several possibilities for improvement. However, one choice might be to alter the two ‘so [that]’ finite subordinate clauses and replace them with non-finite present participle clauses: *I think more police need to be out there, stopping and searching, and catching more people with knives and drugs.*

### 2.3 Sentence Openings

The most common syntactical structure to be positioned at the start of a sentence is the subject, but if every sentence begins with the subject, the repeated structure contributes to a sense of monotony in a text, particularly when the writing also lacks variety in sentence length. Altering the opening syntactical slot can also subtly shift how information in the sentence is conveyed, and what information comes first or last in the sentence. The analysis (Table 4) indicates that at every grade the subject start is the most frequent, as one would expect, but that C grade scripts exhibited a greater usage of subject starts, whilst F grade scripts had a more limited range and lower frequency (although because their sentences were longer, they had fewer sentence openings to analyse).

		SUBJECT		ADVERBIAL				
Mean number of: (per 100 words)		Noun phrase	Pronoun	Adverb	Prepositional Phrase	Non-finite clause	Finite subordinate clause	Verb
GRADE	A	1.30	1.73	1.20	0.23	0.33	0.40	0.13
	C	1.90	1.60	1.87	0.47	0.03	0.43	0.47
	F	0.87	1.10	0.77	0.43	0.00	0.27	0.20

*Table 4: showing the range of syntactical structures used in sentence openings.*

Figure 1 below represents these data visually, and makes it more visible how C grade scripts make heavier use of subject starts, but also how their use of an adverb start is relatively higher. Grade A scripts present a greater range and variety in openings, and only A grade scripts show any substantive use of non-finite clauses as an opening structure. That C grade scripts presented more sentences beginning with a verb is largely due to a greater use of rhetorical questions, particularly *Did you know....?*.

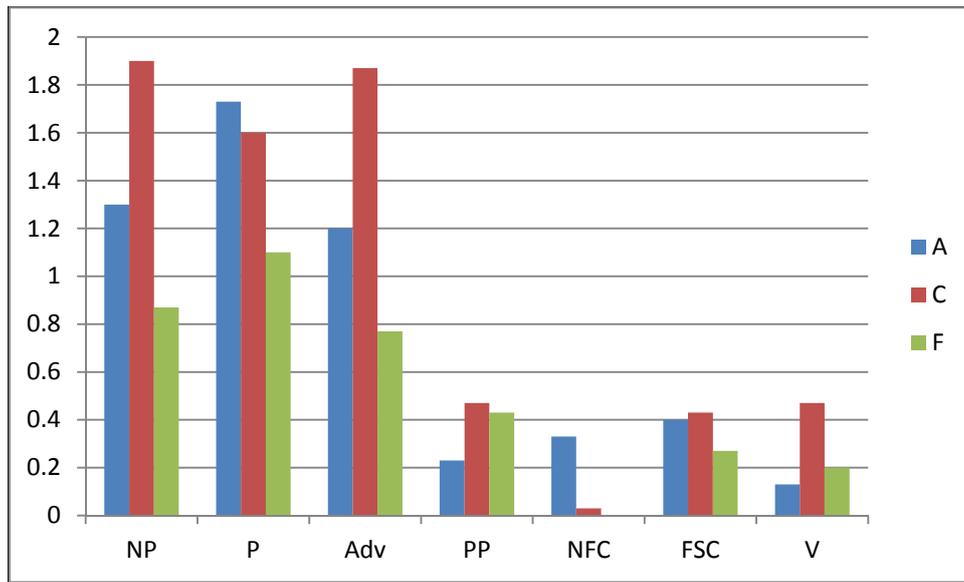


Figure 1: showing distribution of sentence opening structures by grade awarded.

The qualitative analysis reveals that the F grade scripts tend to use personal pronouns, particularly *I* or *they*, often repeating them over several sentences. C grade scripts use a broader range of pronouns, including deictic *this* and *that*, and *someone*; whilst A grade scripts demonstrate a greater use of the inclusive pronoun *we* and the direct address, *you*, reflecting a stronger management of the relationship with the audience. The nature of the writing tasks encouraged candidates to voice their opinion so it is not surprising that the *I think* structure is frequently repeated in the sentence start, especially at grade F, but also at grade C. Tentatively, it also seems the greater use of adverbs by C grade writers may be due to their use of argumentation markers, such as *Firstly*, *On the other hand*, *Finally*. Overall, however, A and C scripts show considerably more variety in sentence openings than F and this reflects their greater effectiveness in attending to audience and purpose. The three extracts below exemplify these tendencies:

*Teenagers call it freedom. Having to sit in the back of your parents' car can be an awkward situation that you want to immediately end. Not to mention if your parents are busy, you might have to wait and end up arriving late! However, it doesn't have to be that way, as cycling and walking gives you the freedom of going wherever you want to go at whatever time you want to go. Isn't that what we, as teenagers, all yearn for...* [A grade candidate]

*Firstly, I think there is a lot of violence with adults due to an excessive amount of alcohol. Once an adult is exposed to too much alcohol, they become much more violent. So I have an idea. As most alcohol consumption takes place in a pub, I think that it is down to barmen to be much more strict about how much alcohol they're drinking.* [C grade candidate]

*I would surgest on making this community safe. I recommend you do something about it, like putting it down on the main headlines saying what parents should do to prectect their child and relitives it be very much appreciated. I think offenders should be punished for it. I think the police should ....* [F grade candidate]

The linguistic analysis also investigated candidates' use of subject verb-inversions (e.g. *you will be healthier if you cycle to will cycling make you healthier?*), not necessarily at the start of a sentence, but anywhere in the sentence. Such inversions allow a writer to alter how the information is revealed for a variety of possible effects: creating suspense or delay; foregrounding information which is not the subject; giving emphasis through end weight and so on. There were very few examples of subject-verb inversions in the scripts, with none at grade F, and with four incidences at both C and A. Three of the four examples at grade C were the same *not only...* construction, and two of them were in the same script:

- Not only is walking great for your health...*
- Not only will you be healthier...*
- Not only does it save the planet...*

This is an effective construction for building argument, allowing the writer to reiterate a previously established point and add to it with a new one. Grade A candidates varied the types of subject-verb inversions they used, but tended to create an emphatic point through the foregrounded adverbs:

- Here is why I believe this is true*
- All too often will a young person be exposed to violent attacks on television*
- ...never have I experienced such cruelty and crude behaviour*
- Here is the website.*

## 2.4 Noun Phrases

The noun/noun phrase (e.g. *eco-friendly bikes on city streets*) is a crucial element of the sentence: together with the verb, it is a key component of communication at sentence level, and is versatile in that it can be simply a single noun, or it can be highly extended with pre- and post-modification (e.g. *eco-friendly bikes* or *bikes on city streets*). The linguistic analysis looked simply at whether the noun was pre- or post-modified, and the length of the longest noun phrase. The data show (Table 5) that F grade writers make significantly lower use of pre- or post-modification, meaning they are more likely to use a noun on its own, with no elaborating detail or information, or that they are using more pronouns (indeed, the analysis of sentence openings above suggests they make more use of pronouns in subject position, relative to their use of nouns). Both A and C grade candidates make considerable use of both pre- and post-modification, with A grade writers making more or less equal use of modification, whilst C grade writers use substantially more post-modification. In addition, A and C grade candidates use longer noun phrases than F grade writers.

Grade	Pre-modified Noun Phrase	Post-modified Noun Phrase	Number of words in longest NP
A	3.67	3.40	11.60
C	2.47	3.60	11.80
F	1.37	1.73	5.03

Table 5: showing the pattern of noun phrase modification and length

A closer analysis of these data reveal further differences in how noun phrases are used. Across all scripts, there was an understandable tendency to repeat verbatim or very closely the wording of the writing question, which in both questions included post-modification. Thus were numerous examples of *best ways of getting around*; *in today's society*; and *the amount of violence*, but most noticeably at F grade, where it seems that candidates were less confident in finding appropriate paraphrases or alternative constructions.

Another feature of the F grade scripts was that there were noticeably more post-modified noun phrases where the communication was inelegant or broke down, or where there was a grammar error:

- the easiest way to stay fit on transport*
- the ones who don't commit the crimes which are burglary, kidnapping, hacking, and identity theft*
- the safety issues that you got to be aware of when riding a bike*
- the other people that they are fat and wants to lose some of the calories*
- any other people who does walking or cycling.*

At C grade, this kind of loss of control was rare: however, in very long noun phrases there was occasionally less effective management of the post-modification, as evidenced in the examples below. The statistical data show that C grade candidates used longer noun phrases than A grade, and it may be that some of this is attributable to poorly-managed or excessive post-modification:

- the real world where natural resources are running out where the earth is melting like the ice lolly left on the kitchen top*
- a way that we can fix these problems so we have less gangs and violence caused from it such as the usual: mugging; beaten up; gang violence and more.*

In both A and C grade scripts, there were numerous examples of well-managed noun phrases, which served to provide well-chosen detail, elaboration or description relevant to the writing task. The use of a noun phrase with apposition was rare, but confidently handled by one A grade candidate, using expert witness to substantiate the argument – *Dr Michelle Hardy, professor at Oxford University and a passionate member of the Green Peace party,....* Elsewhere, the noun phrases created metaphors to express figurative ideas; served to position the reader to understand the writer's position; provided precise detail or contextualising information; and offered description:

- that gorgeous, dreamy, indulgent chocolate ice cream topped with sprinkles and brownie pieces* [C grade candidate]
- the sadistic thoughts of these twisted individuals* [C grade candidate]
- drunken teenagers fighting across this once beautiful town* [A grade candidate]
- your shady older brother with a driving license* [A grade candidate]
- one reason for domestic violence in our community* [A grade candidate]
- a concrete jungle, dictated by the lions who do as they please* [A grade candidate]
- the huge bus, stuck in the middle of the conga , filled to the brim with lazy students* [A grade candidate]
- a 6 inch blade plunged through your healthy chest* [A grade candidate]
- in the streets of Tunbridge Wells* [A grade candidate]
- the amount of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere* [C grade candidate]
- the single most destructive being to live on this planet* [C grade candidate]

### 3.0 TEXT ORGANISATION ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 The Writing Tasks

Before presenting the findings of the analysis, it is worth considering the two writing tasks and how students responded to them. The two tasks both focused on contemporary topics: one on the amount of violence in today's society; and the other one on the benefits of walking and cycling. Both tasks drew on candidates' ability to present a persuasive argument. The former invited candidates to write a letter to a local newspaper, whilst the second was an article for a teenage magazine. In general, candidates did present their writing as a

letter or an article, with a sense of persuasive argument, though the effectiveness of this varied across grades as one would expect. Many candidates made use of the suggested bullet point topic prompts, particularly at lower grades, and usually in the order given in the examination paper. However, some candidates did not grasp the implied argument behind each of the bullet points and wrote descriptive responses, addressing each bullet point in turn. The first bullet point in each task prompted students to consider *'different forms of transport'* or *'the types of violence in our society'*, which initiated several listing responses in F grade scripts which made no argument or connection with the title:

- ❑ *There are different forms of transport like skeoing and poteing*
- ❑ *There are different types of transport that are easy to get around, For example, train, car, bus, aeroplane*
- ❑ *There are a number of different transport forms out there, them being: by foot, by travk, or by wheel*
- ❑ *In here lots of things are happening, such as; stealing mobile phone, stealing money, teasing girls in the public places, bulling young people, and many more things.*

Similarly, many F grade candidates used the remaining bullet prompts as topical, rather than argument, prompts, tending to present information, for example, about the safety issues of cycling, rather than using the safety issues as an argument for or against the proposition. The prompt in Question 9 to consider *'how offenders should be treated'* led to many examples of a single sentence addressing the bullet point prompt but making no argument that connected with the issue of making society safer and less violent:

- ❑ *The safety issues of riding a bike – stay clear of personal, try not ride on pathments because takes a lot of space and people can get hurt – it's good to wear safety equipment...*
- ❑ *There are a lot of issues to do with safety.*
- ❑ *... offenders should be punished by community service or even worse prizon.*
- ❑ *I think offenders should be punished for it.*

In contrast, A and C grade candidates developed an argument stimulated by the bullet point. For example, the prompt about offender treatment which F grade candidates rarely handled as an argument was linked more closely to the title issue of making society safer and was more clearly making an argument point. The two extracts below show this, and also reveal how it is the A grade candidate who most skilfully develops the point into a relevant argument for the topic:

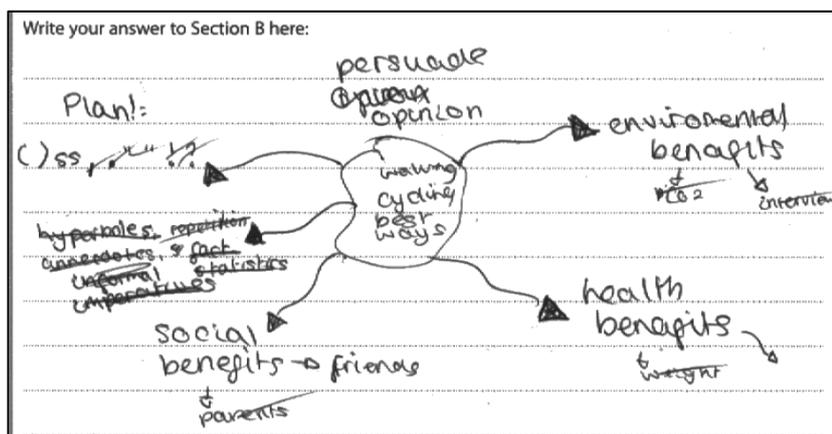
- ❑ *I am deeply saddened that the sentence for rape is only seven years in prison. It should be at least double the amount of jail time. The people that do this act like animals due to the way that they hunt for their next victims. The world we live in isn't right: we could change that so easily. [C grade candidate]*
- ❑ *I believe in the reformation of a criminal mind. If a person is able to carry out a planned attack, why couldn't they turn this into a positive intelligent way of approaching things. They could be planning the architecture for our cherished comminity schools. What is the use in just locking somebody in prison only for them to come back and use their intelligence for evil again? [A grade candidate]*

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the evidence above, some F grade candidates used the bullet points heavily as an over-arching structure for the piece, whereas A and C grade candidates were much more likely to develop their own argument points and rely less on the prompts. It seems evident that the topic prompts have helped candidates in triggering something to write about, especially at grade F, but it may be advisable to consider ways of teaching candidates to use these prompts as possible argument points, not information prompts to avoid restricting candidates to a linear structure for their writing.

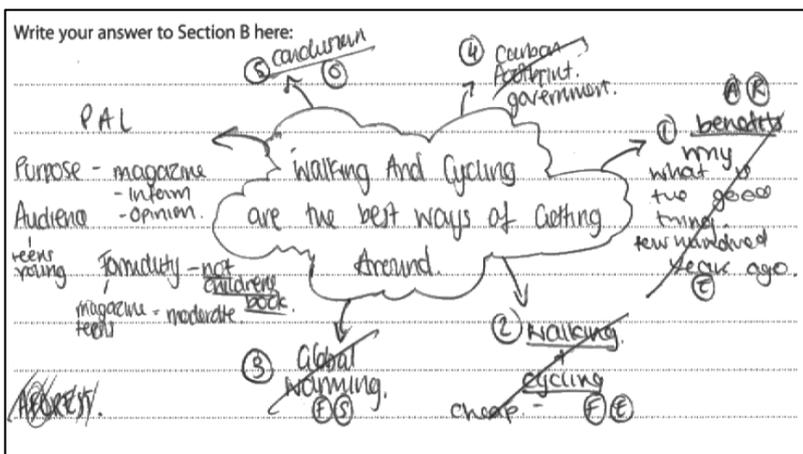
### 3.2 Outlining

One aspect relevant to text organisation may be the extent to which candidates are able to think about their text as a whole piece of writing before they begin writing. More mature writers have a good sense of both *local* coherence, the immediate section of the text, and *global* coherence, the text as a whole, (Englert and Hiebert 1984:76), whereas less mature writers tend to attend more to the local, with less clear awareness of global coherence (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987: 23). This attention to both local and global coherence is important both in the planning stage, during the composing of the text, and at the revision stage, and is linked with understanding the form and purpose of the text to be written and the needs of the audience. An outline of some kind before writing is often an indication of this global sense of the text, and helps the writer to manage the complex task during writing of concentrating both on the current section of text being written and the bigger global shape of the text (Alarmargot and Chanquoy 2001: 52). These outlines can be held mentally, 'in the head', and do not necessarily have to be written down, so it is not possible to determine from the examination scripts precisely what kind of thought has been given to the overall shape of the text. However, it is striking that, of the full set of 90 scripts analysed, only eight candidates had any form of outlining evident in the examination booklet: four of these were at A grade; three at C grade; and one at F grade.

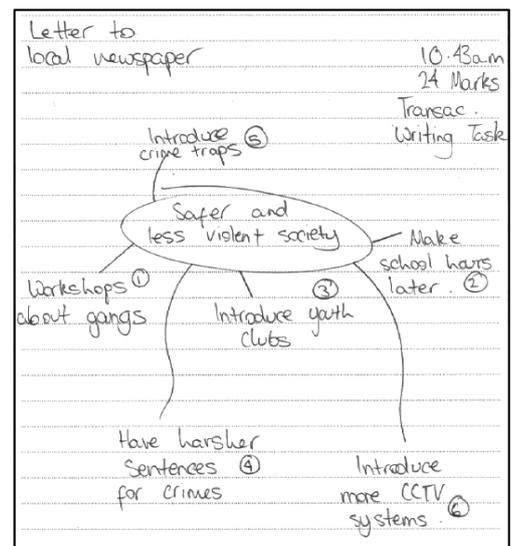
Of the eight outlines, three took the form of spider diagrams (see Figure 2 below).



Grade A



Grade C



Grade C

Figure 2: examples of candidate outlining

These spider diagrams principally support the content of the writing, but by synthesising the information into topics or themes they also offer the potential for supporting the structure of the text. In the two grade C examples, the candidate has also overtly considered the structure at this stage by numbering the points, suggesting an order for handling the different topics. The A grade candidate additionally notes language features of a persuasive text and a reminder of a range of punctuation marks (and the crossing out may be an indication that the writer has ‘ticked’ these off once used). All three outlines also have some form of reference to the writing task itself, whether that is a note that the text is to persuade or express an opinion (grade A), a note that it is transactional writing, or whether it is a more elaborated attention to form and language. One of the C grade candidates uses the acronym *PAL* (presumably Purpose; Audience; Language) as a reminder of key writer considerations, and the writing demands of the Purpose and Audience are elaborated further. These latter examples, where candidates demonstrate they are thinking carefully about what the writing question is inviting them to do are indicative of *task representation*, an important writing strategy which supports the match of content to task requirements. Flower (1987:1) defines task representation as:

*An interpretive process which translates the rhetorical situation – as a writer reads it – into the act of composing. As such it is the major bridge which links the public context of writing with the private process of an individual writer.*

Another A grade candidate had no outline, but showed evidence of some task representation as he had jotted on the corner of the page:

*Teenage magazine*

- *casual*
- *reasonably intelligent*

Further evidence of emerging task representation, if not fully realised, was visible in the C grade candidate who jotted down the acronym *FLAP* (Form; Language; Audience; Purpose) and the F grade candidate, who used the acronym *SPAF* to think through the task:

*S*      *walking and cycling*  
*P*      *to make clear*  
*A*      *teenage magazine*  
*F*      *article*

However, although these examples suggest there is some consideration of task demand, there was no evidence of how this related to what was actually written.

Other examples of outlining were more linear (Figure 3), where candidates scoped out the structure of the text with an overview of the sequence of ideas. Two of these handled the sequencing of ideas with reference to an introduction and conclusion, and to the order of paragraphs and their topic content. The relationship of these outlines to the eventual completed text is strong. For example, one of the A grade script has seven paragraphs, rather than the four implied in the outline, but the broad overall structure mirrors the outline. The introduction elaborates on the outline by painting a descriptive image of the streets overfull with traffic and lazy students on buses, before drawing attention to the importance of walking and cycling. The first half of the text then discusses the benefits of biking, before moving onto the benefits of walking.

<p>Write your answer to Section B here:</p> <p><u>Plan:</u></p> <p>Paragraph 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction</li> <li>- Brief view</li> </ul> <p>Paragraph 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stricter rules</li> <li>- It's benefits</li> </ul> <p>Paragraph 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outcome if no action is taken</li> </ul> <p>Paragraph 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What the Society thinks</li> </ul> <p>Paragraph 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What needs improving</li> </ul> <p>Paragraph 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p>Write your answer to Section B here:</p> <p>tone - informal - purpose - persuade</p> <p><u>Intro</u></p> <p>Agree - talk about the fitness you will get. outline that walking and cycling hold great importance for teenagers.</p> <p><u>Para 1</u></p> <p>Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benefits</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p><u>2</u></p> <p>Bike</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ride your way to a healthier lifestyle</li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p>
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Grade C

Grade A

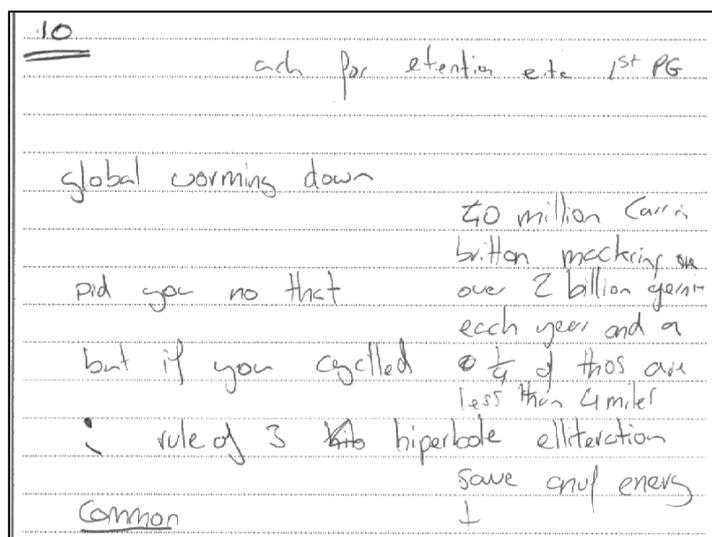
<p>Write your answer to Section B here:</p> <p><u>Plan.</u></p> <p>Purpose: to argue the statement, elaborate</p> <p>Points: eco friendly, good for health independence, 'dangerous' my opinion (conclusion).</p> <p>Point One. Doctors call it vital. Healthy 30 mins of exercise exercise Stat.</p> <p>Point two. Governments call it important. Eco friendly, carbon foot print Stat.</p> <p>Point Three. Parents call it dangerous. Would rather get lifts, buses less chance of getting into danger Stat.</p> <p>Point four. Teens call it independence. don't have to be with parents.</p> <p>Point 5. I call it the future. Conclusion</p>
---

Grade A

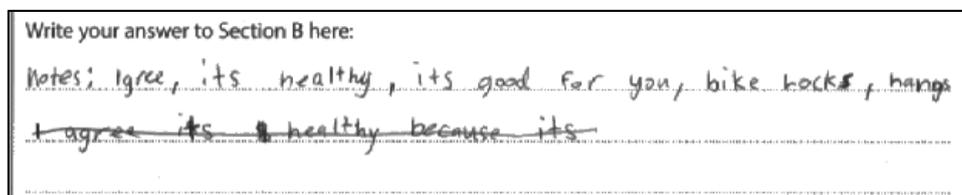
Figure 3: examples of linear outlining

The second A grade example in Figure 3 follows a similar pattern of linear sequencing of points but this one is different as the candidate also devises a repetitive structure for each paragraph opening comprising a simple sentence with a repeated verb, stating how different constituencies were positioned in relation to arguments about the benefits of walking and cycling (*Doctors call it vital. Parents call it dangerous.* etc). This was adopted in the text itself and acted as a strong organiser across the text.

The two other examples of 'outlining' were more limited to content notes (see Figure 4) and might not be considered outlining at all, as there is no reference to the shape or structure of the text, and neither have strongly informed the eventual text that was produced.



Grade A



Grade F

Figure 4: examples of notes as outlining

### 3.3 Openings and Endings

The most obvious signs of text organisation are evident in the way in which texts are opened and ended, as this creates a sense that the text has been shaped with some feel for the writing a coherent, unified whole. Given that many of the F grade scripts were very short, often only one continuous paragraph, the opportunities for shaping were limited by the brevity of the content, and thus in many there was no sense of an opening or an ending at all. However, there were F scripts which did present a clear opening and/or ending, and all A and C grade scripts had some kind of opening and ending. Overall, the sample suggests that awareness of the need for an opening and ending is high, although there are variations in the quality of the execution.

As has been found in previous studies (QCA 1999), in general, management of openings is more secure than closure, almost certainly because they are given more attention at the start of the piece. The two writing tasks, with different audiences and different forms, had a significant influence on the choices made in opening the text. The teenage magazine article tended to generate some form of position statement as an opening, whereas the newspaper letter was very commonly opened by addressing the recipient and then an

opening sentence with some form of statement of purpose. The latter were much more formulaic, with many repetitions throughout the sample of *I am writing to inform you...*

The weakest openings were limited to an opening sentence or part of a sentence, moving very quickly into the main argument, and with no development of the opening idea.

- Walking and cycling are the best ways of getting around and they are healthy too because a car is using fuel...* [F grade candidate]
- Cycling is easy way to get around.* [F grade candidate]
- I am writing to you to day to make your local newspaper safer and less violent because the types of violence...* [F grade candidate]
- I am writing a letter today about the society.* [F grade candidate]

More effective openings, though still inclined towards a single sentence, were more elaborated, and indicated a stronger sense of purpose, and a clearer frame of reference for the text which follows:

- I am writing to inform you on the concern given by local people around our village in the rise of violence in today's society.* [C grade candidate]
- I am writing this letter to inform you and show my concerns about the recent increase in violence in our society.* [C grade candidate]
- Is cycling and walking the best way to get around. In this article, I am going to show you that it is.* [F grade candidate]
- I have mixed views on this topic as I like to keep fit but I have many things to be doing in my day where a car or motorbike would be more practical.* [C grade candidate]
- Walking and cycling are the best ways to get around.* [A grade candidate]

Stronger openings were evident in introductory paragraphs, rather than an introductory sentence, and they developed in a more sustained way the purpose of the text and an emerging core argument:

- I am writing to you today as I am concerned about the amount of violence in today's society. Something needs to be done about this and it needs to be done now. The amount of crime has risen by 20% over the past five years and I have come up with some proposals that can reduce this.* [C grade candidate]
- As time goes by, more and more ways of transport are invented and provided to the public, cars, boats, trains, trams, planes, the list goes on. However, could it not be argued that we – as a nation – are saturated with forms of mobility? We will discuss this today, teens: is cycling and walking best?* [A grade candidate]

Other strong openings showed a clear awareness of audience and tended to address the audience very directly, often through second person pronouns and rhetorical questions. In the examples below, the audience awareness is evident, but at the same time these writers establish the thematic context for the piece of writing, and signal the likely line of argument:

- Trade troublesome traffic for heathy alternatives!  
Have you ever desperately needed to get somewhere and been pulling your hair out as you sit in traffic? Don't worry we all have! That's why I suggest you continue reading this article to find out better ways to travel.* [A grade candidate]

- ❑ *Hey, guys. I know most of you prefer to get your parents to drive you round but why not try a more exciting, healthier and more beneficial way of getting around. Try cycling or if not walking round with your mates. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *Do you hate the environment? Do you want plants and animals to die? Do you want to help cause global warming? If you would rather ask your parents for a lift in the car or would rather catch the bus than walk or cycle to wherever, then YOU are one of the many contributory factors to global warming, death of animals and the destruction of habitat. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *Have you had enough of getting up every morning and being late for work because of public transport? [C grade candidate]*

One small characteristic of the letters to the local newspaper was that across all grades, candidates were uncertain of the appropriate form of address, and there were many variations, from *Dear Sir/Madam* or *To whom it may concern*, through to more awkward or inappropriate openings, such as *Dear Mr Newspaper man*, *To The Bugle*; *Dear Local Newspaper*; *Dear, the owner of the Guardian newspaper*. Although this is a minor point, it does flag that candidates struggled slightly with the newspaper letter as a genre type. Many of the standard letter-writing conventions of positioning of address, use of date, use of a formal salutation and valediction are not used in newspaper letters, so even if the candidates were keen readers of newspaper letters, the models would not help them with this.

Many candidates at both A and C, and some at F were able to conclude their writing appropriately, although the fact that the ending would have been written towards the very end of the examination is reflected in the far higher number of errors in endings. There were numerous examples of omitted words, grammatical errors or infelicities, or awkward wordings, almost certainly a consequence of time pressures. The weakest endings (excluding those which simply finished with no concluding features) tended to be single sentence final statements, tagged onto the end of the final paragraph, sometimes coming as rather a surprise. Even these, however, signalled a sense of audience and purpose:

- ❑ *What do you think? [F grade candidate]*
- ❑ *Just do whatever it takes to end this violence. [F grade candidate]*

Other endings were a little more developed, but offered somewhat perfunctory conclusions, drawing together the key argument, or directly addressing the reader in a simple fashion. The phrase *In conclusion* was a common occurrence:

- ❑ *Walking and cycling are the best ways to get around. There are many benefits for you, your parents and the world. So I think it's an obvious decision to make. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *In conclusion I believe that walking and cycling are the best ways of getting around, although this may not be for all people, but by using other modes of transport and cutting down on using our car etc will have a positive influence on the environment and those around you. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *Thank you for reading another article of Daily Teen Week, we hope to writing another next week. [C grade candidate]*

In general, the endings to the teenage magazine article were more successful than the newspaper letter. It appears that candidates were more confident pitching a concluding message which invited their audience to think about the issues they had raised, and it seemed that writers were more comfortable with ways to end the piece. There were many examples of common rhetorical features: rhetorical questions, imperatives, and strong final statements, as well as confident direct address to their readers:

- ❑ *In conclusion do you want to become that unhealthy, environment damaging, broke monster or that fit, positive wealthy being? I think it's crystal clear what the answer is. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *Just make sure you stay safe stay alert and above all enjoy yourself when getting round see you in next weeks edition. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *So what are you going to do: cycle? Walk? Run? Whichever it is make your decision based on what you care most about whether that is: your parents, the environment or maybe your exams. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *So, come on get up and release those feel-good hormones. Let's get moving! [A grade candidate]*

Candidates struggled to end the letter to the newspaper effectively, and many simply concluded with the standard formulaic valediction, *Yours sincerely*. This demonstrates candidates' struggle with the dual audience and purpose of the newspaper letter: although the ultimate audience and purpose is speaking to a broad local readership about how society can be made safer, the letter first has to be approved by the editor in order to be published. C grade candidates in particular, but also some F grade candidates, were unsure if they were addressing the editor persuading him/her to publish, or writing direct to the local readership, and endings reflected this:

- ❑ *Hopefully I got the point across and you see why I am writing to you. If you publish this piece make it a big article so more people will want to help clean up our village. [C grade candidate]*
- ❑ *So overall I think it is our responsibility to make our society a safer and less violent place. I hope you consider my ideas and write an article on the crime and violence in the newspaper. Thank you for taking the time to read the letter. [C grade candidate]*
- ❑ *So if you please spread the word and publish it and try and make it a better world. Thank you much appreciated. [F grade candidate]*

More generally, candidates were not confident in the appropriate way to conclude this particular form. The newspaper letter, as noted earlier, does not conform to many of the genre conventions of a letter and is in many ways a genre of its own. A glance at the Letters section of the *Guardian* for the 31 December (<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/series/brief-letters>) shows that many letters conclude with a pithy or witty statement, a strong argument point, or some other form of rhetorical flourish. A similar look at my own local newspaper, the *Express and Echo* (<http://www.exeterexpressandecho.co.uk/letters>) reveals greater variety in the quality of writing, but the same tendency towards strong polemic or rhetorical concluding sentences. There were very few examples of candidates choosing to end in this way: the first candidate below shows some understanding of the form in the reference to being a representative of a lobbying group, and both clearly attempt to end with a rhetorical appeal to the reader.

- ❑ *I need your help to make this world a better place! We MUST make a change! We MUST stop this monstrosity!  
Yours faithfully  
Representative of the 'Say No to bullying' campaign. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *I am aware that this will cost both time and money however, is it not a worthy price to pay? By increasing the amount of police officers, education in young people and jail sentences, today's society would be much a better place and things would be how they used to be. [A grade candidate]*

Much more common, however, was to use the more conventional formal letter style of ending as a strategy for closing, with polite thanks and invitations to readers to act on the contents of the letter:

- ❑ *I hope you take my letter into deep consideration. [A grade candidate]*

- ❑ *I hope that you find this letter helpful and use some of my ideas to raise awareness in the community. I also hope that you agree with some of my suggestions and would be willing to help make them a reality. I would like to thank you for taking your time to read this letter, it is much appreciated. [A grade candidate]*
- ❑ *In conclusion there are many other ways of reducing violence to achieve a safe and perfect society. I have listed only a few and I hope you take my concerns into consideration and try to improve our society for the benefit of everyone. [C grade candidate]*
- ❑ *Thank you for reading my letter of recommendations. [C grade candidate]*

### 3.4 Paragraphing

In addition to openings and endings, how a writer manages the main body of a text is a significant aspect of text organisation, and the key structural component of this is the paragraph and how paragraphs relate to each other. Throughout the sample, it was evident that candidates understood the need to use paragraphs. Even at F grade, although there were a substantial proportion of texts comprising a single block of text, there were also a good number who did use paragraphs. Overall, across the sample, whilst there is generally secure understanding of how paragraphs organise a text thematically, there was less sense of confident use of paragraphing to build a strongly cohesive text, with ideas connected across paragraphs as well as within paragraphs.

As noted earlier, the F grade texts were often strongly cued by the bullet point prompts in the question. The script below shows this tendency, and is very typical of some of the more successful F grade scripts. Here the candidate provides a simple introductory opening, framing the piece, although what follows does not wholly fulfil the promise to show why cycling and walking are good means of getting around. The three subsequent paragraphs deal in turn with the bullet point prompts in the question in the same order as on the examination paper. The second and third paragraphs are single sentence paragraphs with somewhat overlong sentences. In each a simple argument is made which does offer reasoning for the value of cycling and walking, though this is undeveloped; and in each, an adverbial sentence start suggests the ordering of arguments (although ordinal adverbials (e.g. *firstly*) are less appropriate here than additive adverbials such as *moreover*, *likewise*, *furthermore*, *additionally*). The final paragraph, in addressing the final bullet point, deals rather literally with the safety issues of walking or cycling but does not link it to the preceding arguments as a counter-argument, or a cautionary argument. Again the ordinal adverbial, *firstly*, is used inappropriately and no actual argument is made in this paragraph. There is no conclusion.

*Is cycling and walking the best way to get around. In this article I am going to show you that it is.*

*Firstly, there are many types of transport like cars, trains and buses but they all contribute to greenhouse gases, which are polluting our world where as if you walk and cycle you are lowering the contribution to pollution.*

*Secondly walking and cycling are much better for your health because you are active where as in public transport and cars you are not active because you are not using as many muscles in your body also you are not burning calories because you are sat on a seat doing nothing.*

*There are a lot of issues to do with saftey. Firstly if you are walking in a big crowd of people you could get seriously hurt. also if you are cycling on the road you could get crashed into by a car or a bus.*

At A and C grade, the issues with paragraphing and how they contribute to overall text organisation are rather different. There was a strong correlation between length of text and grade, with F grade scripts being noticeably brief and A grade scripts the longest. However, many A grade candidates' scripts contained just three or four paragraphs, with many examples of paragraphs over a page long. The problem at these grade levels, particularly at grade A, is organising paragraphs thematically at too high a level so that each paragraph covered a very broad range of content. Take, for example, candidate who, after a straightforward opening, begins the second paragraph with *There are so many great reasons to start walking or cycling...* and then elaborates for almost a page on all the arguments in favour of cycling. The next paragraph begins with *However there are some risks with this and you need to be aware of them before you set out...* which is followed with well over a page detailing risks, which rolls into a final sentence offering a simple ending. For some candidates at both A and C, the text organisation, supported by paragraphs, is reduced to a simple introduction; a paragraph of 'For' arguments, a paragraph of 'Against' arguments, and a simple conclusion. That there is limited building of argument through these pieces is evidenced by the fact that the For and Against paragraphs in many cases could be reversed in order without any significant impact on the overall effect of the text.

Some A grade scripts however showed more careful management of paragraphing to create a well-structured text. There were scripts where paragraph length was varied across the piece with some very short paragraphs to make an important point:

- So take your time, people, take in your surroundings and take in a few gulps of fresh air whilst you're at it.*
- I did it again!*
- We can't.*

There were also scripts which used adverbials or noun phrases to signal a sequencing of argument, albeit sometimes a little heavy-handed (for example: *firstly; one of my ideas; another one of my ideas; a third idea; I also believe*). These paragraph openers then led into developed arguments on a particular point. One A grade candidate (whose outline was discussed earlier in section 3.2) used the structure mapped out in her outline to create a developing set of different perspectives and different arguments related to the walking and cycling topic. Each paragraph began with the same repeated structure: *Doctors call it vital...; Governments call it important...; Parents call it dangerous...; Teenagers call it freedom...*, and the concluding paragraph begins *I call it the future* leading into an expression of the writer's own opinion on the topic.

### **3.5 Audience and Voice**

Underlying both the examination writing tasks is the prototypical persuasive argument, but each task has a different audience, teenagers and a local newspaper readership. Thus candidates needed to execute both their skills of persuasive argument and match how they presented that argument to the specified audience, through achieving an appropriate voice. Across the whole sample, including F grade scripts, there was evidence that candidates understood the demands of audience and had made an attempt to match their writing to the audience, although the confidence with which this was done increased, as you would expect, with grade.

In both writing tasks, at each grade, candidates consistently chose the appropriate first person voice for the writing and made widespread use of second person address to their reader. This was done more extensively in the teenage magazine task as these tended to establish a more informal tone and speak directly to their readers more than the newspaper letter task where there was a higher level of formality. These differences are appropriate to the relevant tasks. At Grade F, this simple use of first person authorial voice and second

person address to the reader were often the only indications of taking account of audience, whereas C and A grade candidates used first and second person voice in more deliberative ways to establish a reader relationship. Frequently A and C grade candidates used first and second person voice skilfully to create a more interactive relationship with the reader, akin to a conversation, especially in the teenage magazine article:

- No, you say!* [C grade candidate]
- Well, I can tell you...* [C grade candidate]
- Well my friends* [A grade candidate]
- Do you feel safe allowing your children into their local shops not knowing what will happen? I certainly don't!* [C grade candidate]
- I don't think so!* [C grade candidate]
- Hear me out!* [A grade candidate]
- So if you ask me...* [A grade candidate]

In both tasks, many candidates used rhetorical questions to invite their reader to think or speculate, and imperative verbs to suggest action. However, at A grade for the magazine article, candidates also made use of discourse markers such as *well, now, so, you know* and tag questions, both of which reinforced the conversational quality of the writing:

- You would not want that would you?* [A grade candidate]
- That's what it's all about, right?* [A grade candidate]

Another characteristic which occurred predominantly in A grade candidates' scripts for the magazine article was the shifting of the determiner from the definite or indefinite article to *those* or *that* in a way that mirrors conversational use, and which would be inappropriate in more formal writing:

- work on those bikini bodies* [A grade candidate]
- taking in that lovely oxygen* [A grade candidate]
- getting rid of that small bit of weight* [A grade candidate]
- wipe away those cobwebs* [A grade candidate]

The more conversational tone of the magazine article, with its more sustained direct address to the reader was less appropriate in the newspaper letter. Here candidates established a personal voice that was more about credibility to the broader unknown audience, and was more strongly focused on the 'character' of the writer. Throughout all grades, the first person voice positioned the writer in expressing his or her opinions about violence, but at F grade and to a certain extent, at C grade, there was an over-reliance on the overt *I think* or *I believe* construction, used repeatedly. More accomplished writers were able to vary this by using alternatives, such as other verbs (*I am concerned; I feel; I assure you*) and adverbials (*in my opinion; personally*). They were also able to balance the use of first person voice to signal authorial stance explicitly with the use of third person statements which implied authorial stance, and they shifted deftly from first person singular to first person plural to draw in the reader:

- We need to protect our fellow human beings...* [A grade candidate]
- We as an influential society should...* [A grade candidate]
- Bullying is not socially acceptable and it's a behaviour that can be changed...* [A grade candidate]
- One reason for domestic violence in our community is the lack of jobs...* [A grade candidate]

Occasionally, some candidates used personal anecdotes to support their arguments and create an authenticity in voice. Two A grade candidates assumed a character voice for their letter, one taking on the role of a ninety year old lady in hospital reflecting on violence in society, and the other taking on the role of a father of two boys aged 12 and 13 concerned about the violence they may encounter. These roles gave the writers different opportunities for positioning and argumentation, which strengthened the voice in these pieces.

The two writing tasks made different demands in terms of formality, and at grades A and C, these differences were very apparent in how candidates handled the task. At grade F, formality was handled less well generally. In the magazine article, there were good examples at both A and C grade of establishing a voice which combined the use of humour, including puns such as *slouch potato*, colloquial vocabulary, such as *wonga*, and informal contractions, such as *gonna*, with more formal vocabulary, particularly in relation to the scientific or intellectual argument about the benefits or otherwise of exercise:

- Being out in the fresh air is very good for you and taking in that lovely oxygen is better than sitting next to a drunk man who hasn't washed in weeks, not a nice aroma.* [A grade candidate]
- Refocus your attention and cram in those last bits of knowledge* [A grade candidate]
- You don't wanna be no slouch potato do you? ... but also decrease the amount of carbon emissions in the atmosphere* [C grade candidate]
- a balanced diet with lots of fruit and veggies* [C grade candidate]

In general, candidates adopted a more formal tone in the newspaper letter, recognising its appropriacy for the broader unknown readership. However, the examination task specified a local newspaper, and there was no evidence in the scripts analysed of candidates using this in establishing voice and a reader-writer relationship. There were no examples of the use of local place names, or naming of local community members to create a sense of a local community, nor examples of incidents or activities unique to a local community. Nevertheless, there were many A and C scripts which achieved appropriate formality. One way this was achieved, particularly at grade A was through the use of more sophisticated and formal vocabulary choices (for example, *patronising; reformation; incorporated; irrational; ludicrous*). Noticeably, in the opening of the letter, whereas F grade candidates wrote openers such as *I am writing this letter...*, many C grade candidates paralleled this with *I am writing to inform you...* whereas A grade candidates had more variations, signalling small shifts in levels of formality:

- I am writing this letter to state my opinion...*
- I am writing to you on behalf of the community...*
- Today I write to you to express my growing concerns about...*
- I am writing to you on a matter of utmost importance...*

At sentence level, formality was often achieved through well-shaped sentences expressing arguments:

- This would firstly decrease crime rates as people would know there was a higher risk of getting caught, and secondly, allow our people to feel safer when leaving the house.* [A grade candidate]
- I am determined to see the world ditch vindictive violence and turn to a safer society.* [A grade candidate]
- I understand you receive many requests and enquiries from different groups of people; however, we must stop this horror and protect the people that live within our society.* [A grade candidate]

Overall, the analysis of voice and the establishment of a relationship with the audience underlined that A grade candidates drew on a broader repertoire of strategies for creating voice, and were more creative in how they achieved this. At grade C and also occasionally at grade A, some scripts focused more on the expression of argument, using some of the well-taught persuasive devices (such as emotive language; the use of statistics; rhetorical questions) but these were less carefully shaped to match the needs of the specified audience.

#### **4.0 Key Messages for teachers**

##### ***For all candidates***

##### **Planning/outlining**

Very few candidates showed evidence of advance thinking about their piece of writing, and developing candidates' ability to spend just five minutes productively on preparation for writing is likely to bear fruit in gaining a better global sense of the text before they begin writing. Teaching candidates how to jot down quickly their possible content ideas, and consider the overall structure and sequence of their writing is helpful: various strategies such as spider diagrams, flow diagrams, notes, or linear sequencing may be helpful. The key thing here is that candidates know there are two things they need to think about: 1) the content and ideas of their text and 2) the overall structure and organisation of their text. The point of this activity is not so much to prepare a detailed outline plan of the text but to go through the thinking processes which help the writer think about the text as a whole and their authorial intentions before they start.

##### **Task representation**

It was evident that some students had an acronym to help them think about the requirements of the writing task, but it was less evident that they were operationalising this in their writing. Support candidates in explicitly considering what *form* of writing is required, what the *purpose* of the writing is, and who the *audience* is, perhaps by annotating or underlining relevant words in the question, or through an acronym. It is also important, however, that candidates develop the capacity to move beyond this identification stage to thinking about what that means: if the form is a newspaper article, what are the genre characteristics of a newspaper article? If the purpose is to provide information, what are the language features of an instructional text? If the audience is non-experts, how might the writing need to be adapted to make it accessible to this audience?

##### **Reviewing during writing**

Encourage candidates to pause regularly as they write to re-read what they have written and to remind themselves of their intentions in terms of form, purpose and audience. Often re-reading a paragraph helps generate new ideas for the next paragraph but it also helps keep the sense of the text as a whole in the writer's mind, while they are focusing on a specific part of the text. Teach candidates how to 'read aloud in their heads': this is much slower than normal reading, when we often read what we think we have written, and helps us to hear our text and be the reader of our own writing. Encourage candidates to pause before they get to the end of the writing and think just for a moment about how to bring the writing to an effective ending.

##### ***For lower-ability candidates***

##### **Managing examination time**

Many F grade candidates did not attempt the writing task at all, or did not finish it, so one clear implication is supporting these candidates in how to manage time in an examination so that they can give the writing question the time it merits.

### **Re-reading sentences whilst writing**

The tendency to long, rambling sentences which managed information poorly was very much a pattern in F grade scripts. It is likely that these writers 'just write' and may need support with strategies that help them think a little more about what they are writing and how best to say. In addition to the points made above regarding encouraging more reviewing during writing, it may help these writers to learn how to orally rehearse sentences or parts of sentences in their head before they write them down. They would also benefit from looking at examples of poorly-managed, overlong sentences and playing with how to rewrite them to make them more effective.

### **Using some short sentences**

The lack of text rhythm and a tendency towards rather monotonous structures was an F grade feature. Look at examples of short sentences in different texts and discuss their effect, both on how the text sounds when read aloud and the impact on meaning. It is important to help these candidates understand that it is not just a case of having some short sentences, but making good choices as a writer about how to draw attention to an idea, description, point or so on by giving it the weight of a short sentence.

### **For average-ability candidates**

#### **Avoiding repetition of similar structures in a text, such as *I think/I believe***

The tendency to repeat *I think/I believe* throughout a piece of writing was found in both F and C grade texts and reduced the effectiveness of the text. Using some authentic texts as models, look at alternative ways of expressing a personal stance, including alternative verbs to *think* and *believe*, and adverbial positioning, such as *in my opinion; clearly; without doubt* and so on. Look also at how the *I think* start point of a sentence can often be omitted but still retain a sense of a personal perspective.

#### **Using paragraphs more effectively**

C grade candidates in general have understood well that paragraphs need to be organised thematically, and have also learned some standard adverbials which support the connection of ideas across a text (*firstly; secondly* etc). Their writing would be strengthened by a more sophisticated use of paragraphing, particularly using thematic organisation to build argument sequentially, rather than organising the text essentially around 'for' or 'against' paragraphs, or the bullet point prompts of the question. One element of this is developing a broader repertoire of ways to link ideas across paragraphs. This is not simply through a better use of a more varied range of adverbials, but also through: lexical connections, such as the use of repetition, synonyms or antonyms to link ideas in two paragraphs; the use of *This* to refer back to the previous argument; and stronger topic sentences (or thesis statements) in paragraphs to flag the line of argument.

### **For high-attaining candidates**

#### **Using clause structures which support the expression of arguments**

The most basic way to express an argument is through simple subordination such as *because, if* and *unless*. However, it might be helpful to introduce high-attaining writers to some of the clause patterns which allow arguments or points of view to be expressed in a more sophisticated way through parallel structures such as: *not only... but also; neither... nor; either... or; if... then; although... nevertheless*.

#### **Being creative in approaching the task**

In the sample of scripts analysed, it was only A grade candidates who took a different approach to the writing task, and even at A grade there were few examples of this. Encourage candidates to feel able to take on different character roles to bring a different perspective to the task, or to develop an alternative viewpoint from the one implied by the question (no-one wrote about why our society is not a violent one, for example).

### ❑ **Avoiding overlong paragraphs**

The points made above in relation to developing paragraphing in average attaining candidates also have resonance at a higher level, but as a consequence of higher-attaining candidates' ability to generate more ideas and write a greater length, the problem of some very long paragraphs was very much an A grade issue. Using some authentic texts presented as unparagraphed prose, experiment with different ways of paragraphing, including looking at the effect of the occasional short paragraph, and discussing the impact of different choices for subdividing by theme. Support these writers in understanding that 'theme' can be an over-arching theme or a sub-theme, and that sometimes 'big ideas' need breaking down into smaller ideas to develop an effective argument. Links could also be made here with using the pre-writing preparation stage to think about the number of ideas and sequencing in a more strategic way.

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