

**YEAR 12 *Trial Exam Paper***

**2016**

**ENGLISH**

**Written examination**

*Sample responses to Section C  
with assessor comments*

**This book contains:**

- three graded sample responses for Section C
- annotated assessor comments for each response including mark range, understanding of ideas, analysis of language and visual features, and awareness and control of language

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## SECTION C – Analysis of language use

How are written and visual language used in the provided texts to attempt to persuade readers to share the points of view presented in them?

### SAMPLE RESPONSES

#### High-range response (Mark range: 8–10)

As education has evolved, attitudes regarding the best way to encourage and reward students have changed dramatically. In his online newsletter article ‘Lead and Achieve’ from 29 January 2016, AJ Smith, Principal of Main Street Secondary College, argues that school awards are not an effective or appropriate way of acknowledging students because they are inherently inequitable and encourage unhealthy competition. Smith presents his point of view in a measured, amicable tone, appealing primarily to his readership’s concern for their children’s emotional wellbeing and their sense of fairness. The subsequent comment from RWTillen rejects Smith’s viewpoint, implying that it is out of touch with parents’ views and ‘reality’. In contrast to Smith, Tillen varies his tone and uses more informal, idiomatic language to present himself as typical of Main Street parents. This is an attempt to appeal to similar common values as Smith; however, Tillen employs a more antagonistic style. **(1)**

The newsletter begins by establishing common ground between Smith and his readers, appealing to their sense of group loyalty and family values. His informal opening – ‘Happy New Year and welcome to Term 1!’ – is enthusiastic, positive and welcoming. His friendly tone portrays a strong sense of him being an approachable leader. Inclusive phrases such as ‘our students’ and ‘we all have one common aim’ create the sense that he is also in tune with parents, and conveys a shared sense of responsibility for their children. He refers casually to ‘Main Street’, rather than using the full school name, and says he is ‘thrilled’ to start the year. **(2)** This pride and connection with the school implies that, as ‘one of the people’, his decisions will have the best interests of students and the values of parents at heart. This sentiment is also reflected in the large banner image. The smiling students give the impression that the school is a vibrant and welcoming place that students enjoy attending. By association, Smith is presented as a capable principal who helps to generate and maintain this positive atmosphere.

Smith, however, quickly moves to demonising the concept of school awards by playing on parents’ protective instincts. Phrases with negative connotations such as ‘ignore’, ‘divisive and outdated’ and ‘unhealthy, competitive culture’ represent awards as discriminatory and combative. Examples of unfair scenarios – in which ‘hardworking, talented’ students were disadvantaged because ‘over 90% ... never did and never could receive a school award’ – further this impression. Smith also chooses competition-based terms such as ‘vying’ and ‘winner takes all’. **(3)** This suggests that the awards have encouraged a ruthless atmosphere in which students figuratively climb over each other for a coveted prize. This impression of harmful competition is intended to trigger a defensive response in parents, who will not want their child to suffer. In describing his change as ‘bold and innovative’ and ‘inspired’, and by using the headline ‘Lead and Achieve’, Smith reassures parents by implying that those, like him, who confidently ‘lead’ always accomplish great things. **(4)**

As he explains his decision, Smith’s register becomes more formal and his tone is more detached to help assert his authority. He uses bombastic euphemisms to describe schooling, such as ‘fascinating learning journey’ and ‘enriching and interesting educational experiences’. He also refers to being supported ‘firmly’ by the research of university academic Dr Amy-Louise Lyttlewood; this connection positions readers to view Smith’s opinions as evidence-based and up to date. The two eye-catching feature quotes from Dr Lyttlewood are echoed by Smith – rewarding ‘the smartest, fastest and

strongest' and 'every day'— to reinforce this connection to her research. By creating this sense of education being a complex process best managed by experts, Smith aims to reassure parents that they should trust his professional judgement and thus adopt his opinions. **(5)**

Elements of the visual imagery also help to accentuate the article's official nature, adding authority to Smith's argument. The prominent placement of the school logo draws attention to this being an authorised document from the school, but also positions readers to automatically associate the name and crest of the school with the happy students alongside it. The photograph of Smith presents him as confidently academic – smiling politely, dressed in professional attire and holding a hardcover book in front of a substantial bookcase – suggesting that his professional decisions lead to the self-assured, cheerful students pictured above. The boxed disclaimer, however, creates a more foreboding impression. The blunt language and strong modifiers, such as 'must' and 'will not', contrast with Smith's intentionally less abrasive style. The disclaimer and images emphasise Smith's position of authority and provide a subtle reminder that Smith is the school's leader and therefore his decisions should be respected as official pronouncements of the institution. This gives the article power without requiring Smith to adopt a more authoritarian tone to assert it directly himself. **(6)**

Furthermore, the strong, declarative sentences that end Smith's paragraphs have the dual effect of highlighting the injustice of the awards and providing an air of implied reassurance that his leadership will successfully redress the imbalance. For example, he states: 'The old system clearly failed us all'. He builds on this impression with terms such as 'interrogated', with connotations of a criminal investigation, to demonise awards and to inspire confidence in parents that he is a decisive principal whose efforts to find a solution have been extensive. Smith adds to this idea with his concluding paragraph. He dismisses the 'some' who may belittle his idea as 'Scrooge-like' by implying that it is they who are selfish and mean-spirited, worrying about 'their résumé', instead of considering 'hardworking' students who have been unfairly overlooked. Closing with a flippant mention of 'a photocopied certificate and a polite round of applause' further demeans the awards and his critics, contrasting sharply with his reference to the 'generous positive reinforcement' of daily feedback that he suggests is far more valuable and lasting in its impact. **(7)**

In his comment, RWTillen uses many of the same techniques as Smith to present his view but adopts a more casual style and varied tone. By introducing himself as the father of 'Main Street kids', who has been a part of the school community for six years, he gently establishes his own authority and right to comment. He also demonstrates his fair-minded nature by commending Smith on his other changes. However, the blunt rhetorical question 'But how is entirely abolishing awards an improvement?' reveals his contention and his antagonism towards the principal's decision. This is the most significant difference between the two pieces: Smith maintains an even and businesslike tone, while Tillen alternates between being conciliatory and condescending. **(8)**

Tillen implies that the principal's decision is a kneejerk reaction to 'one or two' self-absorbed, 'what about me' people who do not represent the majority of parents. He relates his own impressions of 'realistic' and 'normal' reactions, reminding readers, including Smith, that he is a typical parent whose view is shared by the majority. This also suggests that Smith is being neither 'realistic' nor 'normal'. **(9)** Tillen also subtly mocks Smith's language, by disdainfully quoting Smith's phrases 'real world' and 'bold and innovative' to make him seem out of touch. In contrast, Tillen's own idiomatic language – 'kids', 'tall poppy syndrome' and the cliché 'throw the baby out with the bathwater' – is intended to present him as down-to-earth, just like his readers but unlike Smith.

Tillen's final, blunt attack aims to undermine Smith's credibility. He follows his slogan-like truism, 'Sometimes we win, sometimes we don't', which conveys the sense that his view is grounded and

realistic, with the suggestion that Smith is deluded: 'pretending' and 'naive'. This strong opposition is moderated with an appeal for common sense couched in more conciliatory terms – 'Absolutely change the system if' and 'please don't'. This firm but calm and fair-minded tone combines with the attack to leave the impression that Tillen is not intimidated by the principal's assertion of his authority, thus implying that other parents should not be intimidated either. **(10)**

**Annotations**

- (1) The introduction succinctly outlines the issue and the contention of each piece, and briefly compares their main tone and overall approach.
- (2) Clear and coherent connections are drawn between the article's language and the ideas throughout.
- (3) Quotations and examples are short and well integrated into the paragraphs. They support each main point, rather than being the focus of an entire paragraph.
- (4) There is strong and detailed discussion of how some techniques work, supported with carefully chosen examples. The student takes a holistic approach to analysing the main persuasive techniques, rather than trying to analyse every instance of persuasive language. This balance between demonstrating an understanding of the broader, overall effects of language and a detailed analysis of the specific elements that contribute to these effects is vital to a high-level response.
- (5) This shows a clear and sophisticated understanding of how specific word choices work together with an appeal to authority, as well as discussing how structural features (the pull-out quotations) create a particular effect on the audience.
- (6) The response shows a sophisticated understanding of how the range of visual elements work together to achieve a specific impression or aim.
- (7) The student uses a confident and varied vocabulary. Note that the vocabulary is not necessarily complex, just well chosen and descriptive.
- (8) The transition to discussing the comment highlights the similarities and differences between the writers' approaches. The student also shows a strong understanding of the underlying message and tonal shifts in the comment.
- (9) The analysis demonstrates an awareness of how the language of the comment has been crafted in response to the first article and with a slightly different audience in mind (i.e. one that includes both the principal and other parents).
- (10) Careful analysis of the writer's shifting tone in conjunction with a particular persuasive technique (an attack) indicates an awareness of the way in which tone can position an audience.

**Understanding of the ideas and points of view presented**

The student's response shows a sophisticated understanding of the writers' ideas, including the subtler aspects of each point of view. There is a perceptive understanding of how the ideas are conveyed in the context presented.

**Analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers**

The student provides a controlled and well-substantiated holistic analysis of both the language and images. They explain how persuasive devices work together to position the reader and to develop an argument. The student evinces a strong understanding of persuasive devices and the ways that writers create and vary their tone. A sophisticated understanding of how language is used to establish each writer's authority is demonstrated, especially the ways in which language is used in the parent's comment to directly address the techniques in the main article.

There is a good balance between discussion of the broader persuasive approach taken by each writer and analysis of the finer details supported by carefully chosen examples.

**Controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task**

Sentences are diverse and well constructed; punctuation is also used purposefully to aid clarity and precision. The writing is fluent, varied and precise. Paragraphing is used effectively to separate various elements of the discussion. Metalanguage is used confidently and accurately (e.g. 'register', 'rhetorical question', 'cliché' and 'idiomatic language').

### Mid-range response (Mark range: 5–7)

Principal AJ Smith's online newsletter dated 29 January 2016 focuses on student awards. Smith calmly argues that Main Street Secondary College's awards should be cancelled because they were unfair. He uses inclusive and value-laden language and appeals to fairness and family values to argue his point of view. RWTillen's comment forcefully argues that stopping the awards is an over-reaction. The principal's photo and the school's logo and motto are included on the page. There is also a harsh legal warning about inappropriate comments. **(1)**

Smith's first two paragraphs present him as a friendly and capable principal. **(2)** His language has an approachable but knowledgeable tone and uses positive words such as 'thrilled' to describe his feelings about his job. He also uses inclusive language such as 'our students' and 'we have one common aim', to make parents feel that he is on their side. This is intended to make him seem that he is a strong, confident leader who wants the best for students. He also describes working with teachers during the holidays as 'interrogating every aspect of our school's approach' which gives the impression he is working hard to improve the school. This also connects Smith and Dr Lyttlewood (she is an expert in education from the City University). This and Smith's qualifications after his name give him credibility and create an image of him as up to date with the latest advances in education so he should be trusted by parents. **(3)**

Having established himself, Smith also argues by giving reasons for his point of view. He uses words with positive connotations to back his reasons up, for example 'bold and innovative', and this presents his idea as a solution that only he has the courage to suggest. He also uses negative language to describe the old system like 'ignore the efforts of the vast majority' and 'divisive and outdated' positioning readers to feel it was old-fashioned, mean and harmful. This language appeals to a sense of fairness, desire to be up-to-date and family value of protecting their children. **(4)** Since his article is for parents, he wants them to believe that the awards were hurting students and that his decision will help students build better self-esteem for the future. **(5)**

Smith also presents evidence to support his decision. **(6)** He quotes Dr Lyttlewood in large quotes to grab the readers' attention. Mentioning the holiday workshop also suggests that all of the teachers came to the same conclusion, emphasised with inclusive language such as 'we have made this decision'. **(7)** The examples of situations when students unfairly received or did not receive an award show why the old system was unfair too. He uses unemotional tone such as 'students with natural talent in sport or music' and 'even if they missed out by half a percentage point'. **(8)** The examples make parents glad that the injustice was stopped by a caring, rational and calm principal before it harmed their children.

Furthermore, Smith quotes statistics to support his view, such as 'With 200 students ... vying for around 20 awards, over 90% of our students never did and never could receive an award.' This appeals to parents' worries about their children by making it sound as though a huge majority of students were being ignored even though they had 'unique talents'. This is intended to make readers upset that their child's talents weren't valued in the past, but relieved that now they would be valued. **(9)** Smith also appeals to their sense of fairness by saying 'The old system clearly failed us all in that respect'. This suggests that all parents, even of students who won awards, should want change because it's unfair that hardworking students are ignored. The word 'failed' creates strong negative feelings and appeals to parents' instincts to care for children and their fear of them having bad experiences at school. It also implies that if readers don't agree with Smith's view then they must be in favour of the old harsh system that wrecked student's self-esteem. No parent wants to feel like they are supporting that. **(10)**



Smith finishes by admitting that 'some' students and their parents might be 'disappointed' about not winning an award in the future but he doesn't predict the views of RWTillen. Tillen argues in a strong and mocking tone that Smith's decision is wrong because the majority of parents are 'realistic' and 'normal' about awards. **(11)** This suggests that Smith is not either of these things but is 'naive' and 'idealistic' instead and that parents want their children to learn about the 'real world' including how to lose but that Smith's plan doesn't teach that. He ends with a cliché to tell Smith that he shouldn't throw out the benefits (e.g. 'the baby', meaning resilience) with the bad parts of the old system (e.g. 'bathwater', meaning inequality). This positions readers to feel that awards should be made fair, not abolished. This phrase is also a common, everyday one that parents will know, making Tillen seem to be an ordinary parent like his readers. **(12)**

Overall, Smith positions readers to trust him as a professional principal who has the best interests of students in his heart. However, Tillen positions readers to feel that Smith's decision teaches their children the wrong message.

## Annotations

- (1) The photo, disclaimer, logo and motto are mentioned in the introduction, but not in the body paragraphs. Some analysis of the visual elements is required.
- (2) The succinct topic sentences provide a clear but basic structure.
- (3) This paragraph follows a clear and well-structured path explaining what is being argued, how the writer is trying to persuade (with examples) and what effect this has on the reader.
- (4) This is a valid point, but it needs to be explained and discussed separately and in more detail.
- (5) This shows that the student is considering the ideas and techniques that have been chosen to appeal to the article's very specific audience and context.
- (6) This point is made very clearly; however, some linking phrases would help to ease the transition in focus and show the connection more effectively.
- (7) The article uses a lot of inclusive language, but this is only mentioned briefly. The effects could also be explained more fully, particularly in terms of how this inclusive language works in tandem with other techniques.
- (8) The quotations selected here are not well integrated and do not help to illustrate the student's observations about tone.
- (9) This explanation shows that the student understands the technique and its intended effect.
- (10) The final two sentences of this paragraph are simply phrased but are an accurate description of the effects of the language. They also show that the student is taking into account the ways that writers consider an audience's specific attitudes and values when they are shaping their argument.
- (11) This is an interesting way to transition from one article to another that avoids predictable connectors (e.g. 'In contrast to Smith ...').
- (12) This would have been a good opportunity to compare the two approaches as Smith also appeals to that same sense of group loyalty.

**Understanding of the ideas and points of view presented**

This response shows a general understanding of the ideas and viewpoints in the article. The student has recognised the central importance of credibility and authority, as well as the role of appealing to parents' concerns for their children. The discussion of the ideas in the comment is less detailed, but still sound.

**Analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers**

Although there is a sustained focus on language features in this discussion, only some understanding is shown of how the visual and written language combine to produce an overall effect. The student does not always explain how language is being used to persuade the reader to agree in this context. The visual elements need to be addressed in more detail.

The analysis is logical, but lacks the depth and insight of a high-range response. At times the discussion veers towards a repetitive structure that names a technique and labels an effect. More discussion of how the techniques work together and the way tone shifts throughout would also be beneficial.

**Controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task**

This response follows a logical sequence and largely uses grammatically correct sentences and clear expression. A wider vocabulary would have enabled greater precision in the analysis. The sentence structures are quite repetitive; many begin with similar phrases such as 'this suggests that...', 'this implies that ...' or 'this positions readers to ...'. These phrases are all adequate sentence starters but higher-level responses will employ more sophisticated and varied sentence structures and vocabulary.

### Low-range response (Mark range: 2–4)

Mr AJ Smith is the principle of Main street secondary who canceled school awards and argues why in his persuasive article. He doesn't think awards should be given out because most students don't win one. He argues that isn't fair because many students work really hard or have difficult circumstances in their lives to deal with. He uses inclusive language and a lot of appeals. RWTillen disagrees and so he has written a comment to argue the awards should stay. **(1)** His tone is harsh but fair.

The article uses many persuasive language techniques. Inclusive language is used so that parents feel included in what he is saying. **(2)** e.g. 'we' and 'our children'. But he doesn't include high achieving students who he calls 'top of the pile' and 'outdated'. **(3)** He also includes anecdotes about all the students who won and lost to show why awards are unfair. It's pretty clear that the school used to have a problem with students who would win awards but don't deserve them and so readers will see that obviously they had to stop that injustice. **(4)**

Furthermore, Mr Smith makes the people who disagree look less intelligent. He says they only disagree with him because they think he is 'Scrooge' who is a character in the book Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. Saying that people think he is Scrooge makes readers picture the famous person and compare him with Mr Smith. Obviously from the photo of him smiling and how much he cares about students feeling supported he is not like Scrooge. From using this metaphor with Scrooge though readers will also see that Mr Smith is well educated (eg read famous literature), so this will help his case that he knows what he is talking about when it comes to education. **(5)**

In addition, the visuals are persuasive. The school logo and quote of 'Our Diversity Our Strength' means that the school respects everyone who is different. Maybe awards for only high achievers are out of place in a school like that so he is right? **(6)** As I explained, the photo of Mr Smith is supposed to make him look educated, also because of the setting of the library and again this makes readers see that he knows what he is talking about and agree with him. There is also two massive bold quotes from an expert about 'The most meaningful way to celebrate student achievement every day is praise and positive reinforcement' and 'The best schools acknowledge the strength of every student every day, they don't just award the smartest, fastest and strongest'. Quoting this in bold makes them stand out and readers wouldn't be able to ignore them. The fact that the expert helped Smith and the teachers to decide about the awards and backs them up shows parents he knows what he's doing so they will know their kids are in good hands and agree. **(7)**

Finally, the comment is all over the place. **(8)** RWTillen gets aggressive and calls Smith 'naive'. This is right after praising him for his other changes. This makes the issue seem massively out of proportion and so readers will get angry just like RWTillen, who seems to want to stay calm but can't hold in his anger. He even uses a metaphor to make it sound as though Smith's decision is as bad as throwing out a baby. **(9)** The rhetorical question also makes readers angry too and to think 'this isn't an improvement'! **(10)** The comment is pretty bullying, even though he tries to pull it back at the last sentence.

Overall, these articles make you wonder if the principle isn't telling you everything because there must be more to it if a parent gets that angry. It's effective in getting you to question the decision from a deeper level. **(11) (12)**

## Annotations

- (1) This summary doesn't accurately represent the principal's contention or acknowledge the article's nuances. Also note 'should of' instead of 'should have', and 'alot' instead of 'a lot'.
- (2) The student identifies the use of inclusive language, but stating that it is used so that parents feel included is not analysis.
- (3) These are good examples of inclusive language and a basic but accurate description of the intention behind the examples; however, the following example about high achievers is inaccurate.
- (4) The student misunderstands the purpose of the principal's use of examples, which the student mislabels as anecdotes. Here the student engages with the argument rather than analysing the language use. A better way to discuss this section of the text might have been: 'Smith also includes examples that show why the awards have been unfair, making it sound like the school had a big problem with students winning awards when they didn't deserve them. This positions readers to believe that the old awards system needed to change.'
- (5) The reference to Scrooge is a good example of persuasive language use relying on associations and connotations, but the student's explanation misses the point of the reference. It is also discussed in too much detail without being clearly related back to the writer's intended effect on the audience.
- (6) The student's use of a rhetorical question signals that they have veered into presenting their own point of view rather than analysing the writer's use of language.
- (7) The student understands the basic intention behind the inclusion of the break-out quotes, but the analysis must go further than simply stating that they draw attention by explaining how the quotes are connected to Smith's argument. Also, wasting words and time on lengthy quotes is not analysis.
- (8) Each topic sentence relates to the contents of its paragraph and provides some very basic structure to the response. The connectors, although very simple, indicate the flow of the student's ideas ('furthermore', 'in addition', 'finally').
- (9) This paragraph suggests that the student has noticed differences between the two pieces such as an implied recognition of the differences in tone, but the discussion lacks clarity and focus. The student misinterprets the meaning of the phrase 'throw the baby out with the bathwater' and presents very limited observations about the content of the comment.
- (10) This labels the rhetorical question, but doesn't explain *how* it might provoke a particular response from the reader. Throughout the analysis, key techniques are misspelled, e.g. rhetorical question and metaphor.
- (11) The conclusion is speculation and opinion, rather than analysis. While the paragraph suggests how readers might respond, there is no detailed discussion of how the language is employed to shape that response.
- (12) The spelling, sentence structure and expression throughout need work (e.g. isnt, should of, use of first person 'I'). Checking the spelling of key terms is an important part of any written task. Note that the student quotes inaccurately from both extracts, and basic vocabulary from the article has been misspelled (e.g. 'principal' is sometimes spelled as 'principle').

### **Understanding of the ideas and points of view presented**

The student shows a limited understanding of the ideas and points of view presented. Both the principal's main contention and the central point of the comment are somewhat misinterpreted.

### **Analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers**

The discussion does show some understanding of the basic language techniques and text construction; however, this is limited to labelling and providing examples, and does not move into analysis of how the technique positions readers. For example the student writes: 'Inclusive language is used so that parents feel included in what he is saying. e.g. "we" and "our children"...' This does not actually explain how this inclusive language helps to position the reader to agree with Smith.

One or two persuasive elements are labelled and discussed in detail but the student's discussion is not focused on the writer's overall purpose (e.g. the lengthy discussion of 'Scrooge-like', which is also misinterpreted). The student shows little understanding of the way in which various techniques work together to produce cumulative effects. The importance of the audience and context in determining the ways in which the language has been tailored is not meaningfully addressed.

Students should also note that, as this sample response indicates, long responses are not automatically awarded high marks. This response is about 670 words but, as it doesn't meet the criteria and the quality of the writing is generally poor, it cannot receive high marks.

### **Controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task**

The student demonstrates basic language control and expression but the response lacks the variety of vocabulary, precise use of analytical terms, sophistication and fluency that would be expected of a good response.

Many basic errors have been made with spelling, expression and metalanguage (e.g. 'principle', 'metaphore' and 'should of'). The use of abbreviations, contractions, first person voice and casual expressions ('as I explained', 'pull it back', 'all over the place' and 'massively out of proportion') create a register that is not appropriate for the task.

