

Candidate 3

The candidate evidence used in this workshop has achieved the following marks for this Course Assessment component.

Plastic Lives

The candidate has chosen to write a discursive essay on plastic bags. There is a full understanding of the issues involved. From the beginning there is a full engagement with the subject which is highly topical and is discussed in both a Scottish and a wider global context. The essay conveys a full understanding of the detrimental effects of plastic bags on the environment and on marine life by the use of linguistic features used comprehensively to argue and persuade. There is evidence of full research and selection, using facts, figures and timescales to highlight the candidate's sustained line of thought: the harm caused by plastic bags and the importance of the introduction of environmentally friendly bags.

The opening sentence provides a confident contextualisation for the issue of plastic bags under discussion. The candidate fully engages her audience's attention – 'The plastic bubble was burst . . .' This is followed by a sentence giving the alarmingly high figure of 1 trillion plastic bags used worldwide in a year which again catches our interest. The dire consequences for the marine environment of the careless disposal of so much plastic are made clear. The concluding sentence explains the significance of the plastic bag charge in raising awareness of our environmental impact on the world.

Paragraph 2 continues to strongly engage with 'the devastating effect' of discarded plastic bags. There is evidence of full research and selection as the candidate illustrates the damage being caused. The direct connection between harming our seas and marine life and our own food supply is made forcefully. Two specific examples of whales found dead on beaches as a direct result of plastic and other detritus being carelessly discarded, help to some extent to strengthen the candidate's case. Confident and varied expression is shown in the use of a simple but effective short sentence – 'These are not isolated incidents' – which conveys the very wide range of lethal incidents involving whales.

Paragraph 3 focuses on the impact made by the plastic bag charge. There is further evidence of full research and selection as the writer gives examples of the difference made by using two supermarkets in Scotland, the decrease in litter in Ireland, the decrease in litter and increased revenue for charity in Wales and the drop in plastic bag usage in Denmark which has operated the charge since 2003.

Paragraph 4 deals with the imposition of the plastic bag charge and what happens to the money collected. The candidate effectively structures her argument by posing three questions in quick succession – 'what are the reasons behind the charge? Does this affect retailers? Where does the money go and exactly which bags will the customers pay for?' This technique enhances the writer's meaning as it allows the answers to form the rest of this paragraph in which the candidate neatly moves from Zero Waste Scotland's monitoring of 160

retailers to some companies' investment in reusable carrier bags. The final sentence of the paragraph provides a concise summation of the positive outcomes so far.

Another example of effective structuring occurs at the opening of paragraph 5, which considers the opposing argument as a counterbalance to the preceding environmental benefits. The candidate considers the view of many Scottish citizens that the plastic bag charge is merely increasing hypermarket profits at their expense. This is quickly rebutted, although it is conceded that it does represent 'a higher relative cost to those on lower incomes'.

Paragraph 6, which begins 'If plastic bags were as detrimental', conveys depth and complexity of thought as the candidate considers the effects of a complete ban on plastic bags. The writer recognises the potentially harmful effects on the economy in the loss of jobs from plastic manufacturing industries and the consequent loss of revenue to towns and cities. Having recognised this disadvantage of a complete ban, the writer counterbalances this point with the more dire consequences of continuing to use scant resources 'in an environmentally destructive way'. The candidate uses confident and varied expression in the middle of this paragraph – 'While this may have a negative impact on the economy, though this has yet to be demonstrated, in previous cases the short-sighted use of resources in an environmentally destructive way may result in more long term damage to the economy and will need to end eventually; by taking pro-active action the damage may be mitigated'. The two concessionary clauses followed by the clear message of the potential damage builds to the suggested solution after the semi-colon. There is an awareness of European parliamentary measures and the final sentence highlights the limiting of plastic bag use, not its complete cessation.

The penultimate paragraph with its direct address to the reader ('Think of it as a good deed') and its brevity fully engages the reader's attention. The candidate has effectively juxtaposed 'minutes' and 'decades' to convey the thoughtless actions of a moment with extremely long-term effects on the environment. This is another example of the candidate using linguistic features to argue and persuade.

The final paragraph brings the clear and sustained line of thought to a convincing conclusion, highlighting the candidate's commitment to the 5p carrier bag charge to lessen environmental damage and to help charitable causes. There is an understanding of the difficulty in changing human behaviour which shows a realistic view of human nature. The use of the balanced repetitive imperatives – 'Use a plastic bag and become the murderer of precious and valuable species to the ocean's evolution and maintenance or use the environmentally friendly bags and become a 'preserver' – drives home forcefully the stark choices open to us. The final two sentences are realistic in the advice offered and provide a positive course of action for the reader.

This essay is placed in Band 15-13. There is a committed attention to purpose and audience throughout. The candidate shows full understanding and engagement with the environmental issues raised by the use of plastic bags.

There is evidence of full research to support the writer's sustained line of thought. A variety of sentence structures, direct address to the reader, questions and imperatives are used to provide persuasive force. The expression is confident and varied throughout. The essay is given a **mark of 13**.