

Candidate 1

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

Technology: our servant or master?

The candidate has chosen to write a discursive essay on the topic of technology and its influence on our lives. The essay demonstrates adequate attention to purpose and audience. The topic is vast and the candidate deals with a range of relevant arguments for and against technology. The essay has an adequate line of thought and shows adequate understanding of the topic.

The essay starts with a short opening paragraph, where the candidate introduces some of the main points they will deal with in the essay.

Paragraph 2 opens with a short topic sentence which introduces the first main aspect of the candidate's essay – technology and its influence on communication. The paragraph lists some of the key ways new technology allows us to communicate and the improvements it has brought, eg the immediacy of communication. The candidate moves on to look at the negative consequences of communication and uses a successful linking phrase to introduce the opposing arguments: 'There are downsides to communication through technology'. The candidate then focuses on teenagers in particular and their vulnerability when online – a relevant and current issue. The candidate makes valid points in this section and demonstrates a line of thought.

In paragraph 3, the candidate develops the idea of the vulnerability of young people online by considering the difficulty parents have in relation to policing what their children are viewing online. The essay uses the example of inappropriate video games to illustrate the main point. However, the candidate's argument becomes less focused at the end of the paragraph with the statistics about video games and the assertion that, 'violent behaviour from gamers is caused by video games'. There is some less fluent expression in this paragraph with the phrase, 'because of parents not being able to make the internet more filtered'. However, the expression in general throughout the essay is adequate.

The fourth paragraph introduces a relevant new point – the influence technology has on family life. The paragraph considers the idea that interaction between family members has declined as a result of our use of technology. This paragraph includes some more complex expression in the sentence, 'Individually, family members are leading separate lives in rooms apart, each accessing a different form of technology'. The paragraph ends with the idea that Skype and FaceTime are better ways to communicate than telephone as they allow 'face-to-face communication'. This is a valid point but could have been developed further.

In paragraph 5, the candidate considers several ideas which fall under the broad topic of the internet's negative influence on young people's view of themselves. The essay deals with several relevant ideas, including the pressure to use social media, the influence of celebrities on body image, cyber-bullying and its possible

results, which demonstrates adequate research and the candidate's genuine interest in the topic. There is some confusion in this section over the deaths of two different girls – 'a 14 year old girl from Italy' and a British girl. The candidate seems to merge these two separate incidents together.

The sixth paragraph which begins, 'You can store an unimaginable amount of information online', moves on to the topic of online privacy. The candidate uses the contemporary high profile case of the actress Jennifer Lawrence to illustrate the dangers of storing information online. This paragraph illustrates a valid counter argument about the convenience of storing information online. The candidate then uses the linking word 'However' to introduce a further negative point about our online footprint and targeted advertising. This is quickly followed by two more relevant points about how online information might affect employment chances and online fraud. This section again shows evidence of adequate research, but several of the points would benefit from further development.

Paragraphs 7 and 8 deal with the effects of technology on young people's education. Paragraph 7 introduces a new concept about technology distracting pupils from learning in class. The eighth paragraph follows on with the valid suggestion that literacy levels may be declining as a result of technology. The candidate considers the quite complex counter argument that the way we read may just be changing, rather than our reading abilities declining. Again, the candidate's points are relevant and discussion is adequate but could be developed further.

The concluding paragraph is short but the candidate's stance is conveyed. The candidate states that 'technology benefits our way of living'. Although the candidate has demonstrated this point throughout the essay, this statement could have been more successfully balanced with some reference to the various negative aspects of technology considered in the main body of the essay. The essay ends with a rhetorical question, which again adequately conveys the candidate's stance on the topic.

This is an adequate essay at Higher level and so is placed in band 9-7. The essay topic is a wide-ranging one and the candidate shows adequate understanding of aspects of it, although individual points would benefit from further development in places. The essay is characterised as adequate in the following areas: the candidate's use of research, the essay's structure and the use of the linguistic features of the genre with examples of linking, topic sentences, use of balance, statistics and rhetorical questions. It is awarded **8 marks** out of 15.

Candidate 2

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

There's no place like home school...

The candidate has chosen to write a discursive essay on home schooling. There is clear attention to purpose and audience: the essay sticks firmly to the subject, which it examines in some detail. The writer shows clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of home schooling as shown by careful research into various aspects of it. The title is aptly chosen and catches the reader's attention as does the use of a learning intention and the opening question. The essay begins by making clear society's tendency to be critical of home schooling, while indicating the writer's support. It goes on to deal with some of the problems of a structured school day set against the individual nature of home schooling and the benefits it brings. Research is used throughout to support comments on motivation, the benefits of learning through life experiences and the importance of outside activities. The expression is clear and various linguistic techniques are used successfully to create impact.

The essay provokes debate in its audience by the opening learning intention – 'to be able to enjoy learning in a non-pressurised environment'. This is followed by a question challenging formal schooling as the key to a child's success. This sets up the writer's response that she strongly supports home schooling in its use of pace and a variety of methods to suit the learner. There is a clear line of thought with each paragraph developing the argument further.

Paragraph 2 deals with the happiness of young people. It opens with a three item list of three negative feelings rarely experienced in home schooling – 'Stress, pressure, anxiety'. This is a linguistic feature used to argue or persuade. This leads the writer to proclaim that it is a human right 'to have freedom' and to contrast this right with the rigid structure of school. The advantages of home schooling in the form of sleep, and consequently health benefits to the teenagers involved are stated from research findings. Again, the writer uses a question about the reason for school's centrality in education. This leads to the careful selection of American research findings on the increased number of home schooled pupils who are happy compared to those in a formal school environment.

Paragraph 3 deals with a comparison of educational achievement between home-schooled and formally schooled students. It focuses on the specific advantages for each child being educated at home with an education tailored to that child's individual needs. Unlike the same pace for all learners approach of school, the writer states that the 'home educator has the opportunity to assess their learner's strengths, weaknesses and learning styles with the addition of identifying their personal interests in life'. The results of a Canadian study showing that home-schooled pupils outperform those in public school supports the writer's argument and again shows evidence of careful research selection, although it is based on a small sample (74 candidates).

Paragraph 4 continues to promote the benefits of home schooling in the form of motivation. This is effectively highlighted by the use of a one word sentence. While the benefits of smaller class size are established by the results of the experimental study quoted, and it does strengthen the writer's case that home schooling is more beneficial, the point is perhaps slightly less convincing. This is because the research is based on the formal setting of a kindergarten, and the writer extrapolates from this that 'one to one' teaching must therefore be better. Although this may be a reasonable assumption to make, the link with the evidence is indirect.

Paragraph 5, which begins 'Every single person's life', deals with the importance of each individual child learning through 'everyday experiences in different environments rather than a formal school setting'. The advantage of being able to access a wide variety of different educational excursions to increase knowledge in many subject areas is highlighted as being central to home schooling, while the writer concedes that formal schooling does include some of these opportunities, but to a more limited extent. The paragraph ends with the statistic of 92% on a home school blog feeling that being home schooled had been an advantage to them in later life. There is a final sentence flourish in 'Home schooling opportunities may be the road to success' before the candidate moves to consider the opposition.

Paragraph 6 clearly shows the candidate's use of structure to enhance her argument. We have had the proposition, now we turn to the opposing argument. It opens with a recognition that school does provide children with chances to socialise with those of a similar age and personality. The writer is happy to accept this point, but it is made clear that home schooled children have greater opportunities to interact with people from all age groups. Having made this point, it is backed up by Dr Ray's evidence that home schooled children are involved in 5.2 extra-curricular activities which is more than those in formal schooling.

The penultimate paragraph makes clear the writer's early experience of home schooling and her strong support as a result. The ability to cope with life's 'little puzzles' as well as learning facts has helped the writer in her family life, especially with her grandfather, and this is expressed in a finely balanced sentence using repetition and 'not only . . . but also': 'Being home schooled not only allowed me to learn in a place where I was comfortable and safe, but it also allowed me to appreciate the little solutions to huge problems'. While this provides clear evidence of the candidate's engaged stance, it could have been developed at greater length.

The final paragraph rounds off the essay neatly with the short, effective well known saying: 'There is no place like home', recalling the title and coming full circle. This sentence is then developed to make the writer's final point. The final sentence with its rhetorical echo – 'No place like home schooling, to become an intelligent individual' – leaves the reader in no doubt about this writer's line of thought and ability to use a structure which enhances the purpose of promoting home schooling.

This essay fits the band 12-10 in its clear attention to purpose and audience. There is evidence of clear understanding and engagement, careful research and selection and a clear line of thought. There are linguistic features of groups of three, use of questions, the presentation of points followed by evidence and evaluation. The structure is clear throughout. As a result, this essay has been placed in the middle of the band and given **11 marks**.

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**.

Candidate 4

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

Lost but not forgotten

The candidate has chosen to write a short story with the title 'Lost but not Forgotten'. This piece has clear creative qualities and attention to purpose and audience. The story focuses on the central character of Jock. We initially see him visiting a World War I cemetery in France searching for the name of a long-lost comrade, Albert Monteith. This leads into the central part of the narrative which takes us back to an incident in WWI when Jock was 'lost in no-man's land'. As he tries to get back to his own lines Jock encounters Albert, a seriously injured fellow soldier. Although Jock attempts to help him back to safety, he eventually has to abandon him, causing Jock to experience great feelings of remorse and guilt. At this point, the story switches back to Jock's visit to the war cemetery and his discovery that Albert's body had been identified and his name placed on the war memorial. This discovery relieves Jock of the burden of guilt which he has carried for so many years.

One of the successful features of this story is the clear structure which enhances its purpose. The candidate chooses an interesting structure whereby the main war story is framed by Jock's visit to the war graves. This shows the candidate's ability to manipulate conventional narrative form with some success.

The opening paragraph focuses on Jock's visit to the war graves in France, something we are told 'he had long dreaded'. As he walks towards the war memorial, the writer clearly describes the scene and adds impact through the extended use of war imagery. The cracks in the monument are described as 'poorly healed battle scars'; the fading lettering as 'continuing their fight together' against erosion. This is successful use of imagery. However, not all of the writing in this paragraph is quite as fluent. For example, the expression 'his wandering eyes frequently became entangled and lost among the maze of lettering' seems less assured. Nonetheless, this is a successful opening paragraph which leads neatly into the central war narrative.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 are set on the battlefield and deal with Jock's attempts to return to his own lines. The writer is clearly attempting to convey both the horror of war and Jock's terror. Much of the description is realistic, quite powerful and clearly engages the reader. For example, in describing the failed advance, the candidate writes 'the air laden with the smell of cordite and the screams of his comrades torn apart by the gunfire and explosions'. The choice of language in paragraph 2 has clear impact in conveying the horrors of war. The candidate is also successful in capturing Jock's terrified state of mind. He does this through a combination of good use of language: 'His heart thumped in his chest, his blood raced through his veins'; imaginative use of imagery: 'he wheezed like an asthmatic child'; and clearly controlled sentence structure: 'He felt like a coward – too scared to move onward, too scared to fight, too scared to die.'

Jock's dilemma is then crystallised when he realises the appalling vulnerability of his situation. Again, there is clear control of structure in the candidate's use of single word sentences: 'If he took a step forward he could be gone forever. Dead. Forgotten.'

In comparison with other sections of the story, Jock's encounter with Albert is less well-handled in places. For example, in paragraph 5, Albert's greeting to Jock: 'Hello Jock . . . am I glad to see you' seems slightly incongruous given the gravity of the situation. Similarly, the description in the sentence beginning 'His thick eyebrows, now obscured in dirt, rose producing large, defined, wrinkles across his filthy forehead. . . ' is less successful.

However, most of the writing in this section as a whole demonstrates the writer's clear creative qualities and grasp of genre. There is the use of the alliteration in the middle of paragraph 8, to convey the extent of Albert's suffering: 'this only served to produce desperate wails and whimpering'. There is a clear attempt in paragraph 9 to vividly convey Jock's inner fears about Albert's dire situation: 'He'd never be found; his body would end up as flesh picked over by the circling crows, eradicated from memory'. And there is the successful use of imagery, in paragraph 10, to convey, in a very graphic manner, the hopelessness of the situation for both men: 'dragging him behind like a slaughtered animal's carcass, he made little progress'.

In the penultimate paragraph, the writer brings the WWI section of the story to a successful conclusion by focusing on Jock's feelings of guilt at being forced to abandon Albert to his fate. There is good use of repetition here to convey Jock's despair: 'Albert would be devoured by no-one's land. No body to remember, no body to grieve, no body to bury'. The candidate also uses imagery to stress the depth of his guilt: 'the realisation of his betrayal infected his thoughts' which brings this section neatly to an end and sets up the return to the war cemetery.

In the final paragraph, the story is brought to its resolution as Jock is released from his burden of guilt. The candidate conveys this release through Jock's recognition and relief that Albert had not died as an unknown soldier. The moment of his release from his guilt is well expressed through the impact of the final two short sentences: 'Albert had been found. He had been remembered.'

In conclusion, this piece demonstrates clear creative qualities and is placed in band 12-10. By using a framing device to add depth and meaning to the main story, the candidate shows a clear awareness of structure used to enhance purpose and meaning. The writer uses language in an interesting way to capture both Jock's inner turmoil, and to develop the theme of the destructive horrors of war. The writer shows a clear grasp of the genre, meets the criteria for band 12-10 very fully and is therefore awarded the **mark of 12** out of 15.

Candidate 5

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

Scarred

This candidate has chosen to write a creative piece in the form of a dual narrative entitled 'Scarred'.

The candidate has chosen an unusual narrative style and shows a skilful command of the genre. The dual narrative is in the form of a dramatic monologue related by two characters, Erich and Esther. The nature of the relationship between the two characters is gradually revealed by the candidate – Erich was a Nazi soldier and Esther was one of his victims. Erich is dying in hospital, still entrenched in his ideologies and unapologetic for his actions, while Esther has moved on with her life and has understood the necessity to forgive. The 'Scarred' of the title refers not just to the physical state of Erich but also to the fact that it is he – Erich – who is the one who has been most morally and mentally scarred by the war, not Esther who was one of his victims.

This theme of forgiveness is skilfully and succinctly dealt with by the candidate, showing both strong creative qualities and a strong degree of sensitivity.

The first character we meet is Erich. We are told that he is on his 'death bed' and is 'scarred' and 'wasted'. He is linked to a machine which seems to be monitoring his vital responses. He is thinking back to when he was 18, 'young and fit' and 'ready to serve my country'.

The candidate makes skilful use of language to implicitly refer to the Jewish people, described by Erich as a 'plague'. This imagery is continued with the reference to the fact that he saw his ideology as offering 'Promises of a cure'. Confident use of imagery is again exemplified with reference to this ideology as 'an engine of development' and this helps to start to build up our perception of Erich as an unsympathetic character.

At this point the candidate tells us that the 'machine picked up speed' and throughout Erich's monologue the machine he is hooked up to acts as both a literal and metaphorical device. We are told that 'The machine picked up speed' as 'promises of a cure' were made – a metaphor for the rise to power of the Nazi regime. This skilful use of linguistic feature creates a strong impact on the reader.

Erich goes on to describe the allure of the Nazi party for him: 'we needed them and they needed us in order to make our country great again. Who would deny an answer to their problems?' Again, there is reference to an 'illness' which Erich felt his ideology could cure. The single word sentence 'Freedom' shows what Erich felt these beliefs offered him and this staccato structure is repeated throughout his monologue, serving to further emphasise the cold-blooded monstrosity of his actions: 'I threw them into pits, made them work and made

them suffer'. The word 'freedom' here is a positive word which has had its true meaning distorted and twisted, mirroring this character's mindset.

Further evidence of Erich's warped sense of morality is shown when he recalls a specific victim – 'one of the vermin' – who left a scar on his face and who he shot immediately in revenge. Erich always felt that right was on his side: 'Their death was good'. He saw his actions as positive: 'I helped restore justice to our country' and he further describes 'the ones who deny their actions, who deny their involvement' as 'weak'.

The candidate has shown considerable control and skill in his depiction of Erich as a ruthless murderer. His character can even find self-justification for his escape from the law: 'I fled. Not out of weakness but by force. I couldn't be in my great country and watch it slowly die.'

Erich recalls how even as an ordinary citizen he clung to his beliefs and hatreds. This is symbolically represented by the fact that 'The machine sped on'.

As he contemplates his imminent death, the 'beeping' of the machine almost acts as a form of punctuation – the three 'beeps' between the rhetorical questions he asks acting almost as ellipsis and when he reveals that he is empathetically unapologetic for his actions with the dramatic 'No', we are told that, 'the machine stopped'.

The depiction of Erich is skilfully controlled and creates a strong impact.

The second character – Esther – is then introduced. Her character acts as a counterpoint to Erich: where his is speech staccato and cold, her narrative is much more extensive and engaging.

Esther's monologue begins with her memory of her father being taken away before she was removed by 'The blue eyed monsters'.

The candidate here nicely mirrors Erich's monologue, with Esther acknowledging: 'they blamed us for the fall of the country and blamed us for the problems that we too suffered'.

The contrast between the mindset of the two characters is rather nicely summed up in Esther's one sentence paragraph: 'They had been brainwashed' and indeed the character of Esther shows understanding and perhaps even a degree of compassion towards Erich.

The link between Esther and Erich is hinted at by the reference to the 'yellow star', again showing the confidence and control of narrative which this candidate skilfully displays. The context of the events referred to in the monologues is revealed subtly and implicitly.

Esther recalls the horror of what she witnessed: 'Shaved. Stripped. Silenced. . .'

The link between Erich and Esther is revealed as she remembers the incident where a soldier shot a would-be escapee. We realise this soldier, who was 'completely ruthless' was Erich. The thematic concern is skilfully developed by the candidate with Esther's reference to the scar left on the soldier – 'he would heal' – in contrast with 'What we suffered would leave an everlasting mark on not just us but on humanity'.

Esther remembers the horrors of what she has witnessed but has realised that she must 'educate others' to prevent history from repeating itself, unlike Erich who could not move on. This mirroring effect between the reactions of the two characters and the subtle interweaving of the two narratives shows a skilful command of the genre by the candidate. Esther's perception of an 'unjust war' is contrasted with Erich's perception of justice.

Esther asks herself if she can forgive what happened and answers that 'I must' in a clear, dramatic and emotional final sentence which contrasts with Erich's emphatic 'No' when he asks himself if he wishes to apologise for what he did. Esther can forgive and move on while Erich remains unforgiving and scarred and dies. Decency and humanity has triumphed over evil.

This is an impressive piece of writing and is placed in the Band 15-13. Strong creative qualities and the candidate's command of the genre are evident throughout. The use of the dual narrative is skilfully handled and the contrast between the staccato language of Erich – punctuated by the noises of the machine monitoring his vital signs – and the more engaging, forgiving tone of Esther is subtle and well controlled.

The piece is rounded off well and creates a powerful impression on the reader, while the deceptively simple title – 'Scarred' – resonates throughout. This piece is awarded **15 marks** out of 15.

Candidate 6

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

Can I be Bothered?

This is a piece of personal writing entitled “Can I be bothered?” Here the candidate adopts a chatty, conversational tone which conveys a strong sense of the writer’s personality and individuality throughout. The topic is one which many candidates attempt, with varying degrees of success. This piece shows a strong attention to purpose with confident and varied expression.

The piece opens with the candidate acknowledging that he is lazy but that he realises that ‘the day of reckoning is looming’ in the light of recent school reports. The candidate tries to justify his laid-back approach, comparing his behaviour to that of the ‘boy . . . on the burning deck’ but ultimately recognises the ‘sad’ fact that the teachers may be right.

The candidate goes on to tell us that his lack of effort is also being criticised at home and makes reference again to the poem about the boy who stood on the burning deck although he – unlike the boy in the poem – is ‘all too ready to abandon my post’. The candidate’s easy, informal and self-deprecating style is very engaging and there is a strong degree of self-awareness throughout. This tone continues into Paragraph 4 with the acknowledgement that he deploys ‘many work avoidance tactics’.

In Paragraph 5, the candidate reflects on the fact that he was not always lazy and that ‘as a small boy, I rose before the rest of the household’. In this paragraph, there is also further reference to the children’s TV programme ‘The Hoobs’, first mentioned in Paragraph 4. The candidate is making an attempt to endear himself to the reader here by acknowledging that, despite getting up early; he was ‘not exactly throwing myself into an energetic pursuit’.

The easy, relaxed style of the writing should not blind us to the fact that the candidate is using confident expression and vocabulary with phrases such as ‘cultural allusion’, ‘luridly coloured’, and ‘vindicated’ in this same paragraph.

The candidate moves on from discussing children’s TV programmes to video games and virtual football in particular – ‘Why stand on a cold touchline when you can sink into the warm embrace of a sofa?’ He freely admits that he much prefers virtual football to the real thing, even though for a time he ‘even enjoyed playing in driving wind and rain’, but, eventually, he succumbed to the allure of ‘the easy option’ as ‘These gruelling conditions weren’t for me’.

His new career as sofa-bound manager left his mother singularly unimpressed: ‘my mum has shown me the red card as far as FIFA is concerned’. The red card image shows a skilful use of language.

The candidate says that despite the impression that he may be giving, he does have ambition and considers himself to be dependable, evidenced by the fact that he has a morning paper round. The candidate suggests that this offers some hope and this, combined with the inspirational recent visit from his 'model student' sister, should provide the impetus required to get them through their exams. The relationship with his sister is illustrated in the penultimate paragraph – she is described as having 'a bossy nature' and he admits that 'hearing about her A grades' brings out the competitive side in him and there is a note of grudging admiration in the description of 'her stoical approach to her studying'. As a result, the candidate seems to have resolved to change his lazy ways: 'it's time to take up the mantle. It's time to act'.

This resolve is short-lived, however, and, by the final paragraph, the candidate refers to 'the Nutella calling' and 'FIFA awaits', rounding the piece off by referring to the distractions which were mentioned at the start.

This piece characterised by a strong sense of the writer's personality and individuality and clearly belongs in the 15-13 band. This is a confident piece of writing and the candidate sustains an engaging stream of consciousness and uses an effective structure, moving between the past and present skilfully. Language use is also skilful, with word choice such as 'languorously loafing' in Paragraph 6.

The piece is not without some less successful aspects: the repeated references to 'The Hoobs' do take us a little off topic at times and the final rounding off paragraph could be seen as a little disappointing. Overall, though, there is no doubt that the candidate has a skilful command of the genre. He writes with strong and confident expression throughout and the observations he makes about his lack of motivation at times demonstrate a strong degree of insight.

This piece is awarded **14 marks** out of 15.

Candidate 7

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

The Claus of a Predator

The candidate has chosen to write an essay on the subject of the predatory nature of Santa Claus, urging us to purge the traditions and culture of this inherently evil character. Clearly, the candidate is dealing with whimsical ideas and what she produces, ultimately, is a clever and entertaining conceit. The main body of the essay explores six fanciful proposals in support of Santa's sacking: his exploitation of 'non-humans' slaving away in his grotto; his cruelty towards reindeer, forced to circumnavigate the world on Christmas day; his violation of 'migration conventions' on this world-wide journey; Santa as burglar, breaking and entering into people's homes; his side-occupation as petty thief and forays into drink driving, and finally his devious manipulation of his appearance in order to avoid detection.

Much of the humour of this piece is created by the candidate adopting the conventions of persuasive writing – the committed stance, the antagonistic point of view, various rhetorical devices – but within this expected and familiar framework exploring ideas which are essentially absurd. The opening paragraph is a good illustration of the success of this approach. The argument is clearly established: Santa 'breaks national and international law' and for too long we have accepted his pernicious presence just because he is, well, Santa. But any notion that this might be a superficial, silly piece of writing is quickly dispelled by the realisation that this candidate has a skilful command of language and rhetorical devices. She uses alliteration ('tattered tinsel and crumpled crepe paper'); parallel sentence openings to reinforce that faux-urgency of the issue ('For too long, we. . .'); and repetition of 'we' and 'us' to pull the reader in and emphasise the inclusive nature of action that must be taken if we are to overcome the tyrant Santa. The mock-heroic call to arms – 'Let us shake off the ghosts of Christmas past, and move forward into a future of equality and cheer!' – at the end of the introduction establishes this candidate's clever use of Christmas clichés which are artfully subverted to create comic effect, a technique she returns to throughout the essay without it ever feeling tired or overdone.

One of the striking features of this piece is the candidate's ability to write genuinely funny prose in an apparently effortless way. She often uses hyperbole to achieve this: in Paragraph 2, Santa's acts are described as 'heinous', he is a 'tyrant' and his cruel treatment of his elves is characterised by 'sheer depravity'. We see this technique again in Paragraph 3, when Santa is a 'cruel conspirator', and his reindeer are forced to 'drag a heavy sleigh, full to overflowing with toys'; in Paragraph 6 when he commits a 'disgusting act of theft' (which is given further comic weight by its juxtaposition with the 'drink and biscuits' which he steals); and in Paragraph 7 when Santa's crimes are described as 'horrendous' and 'nefarious'. Clearly, this is a candidate who has a confident understanding of how language works, and an impressive ability to play with

language to create humour – not an easy effect to achieve, let alone sustain, even for experienced writers.

One of the successful approaches of the piece is to take aspects of the Santa Claus mythology and consider these in all apparent seriousness in relation to the real world. In Paragraph 4, for example, Santa is attacked for his complete ‘disregard’ of the ‘world’s migration conventions’. Naturally his journey across the world in the early hours of Christmas morning involves crossing several continents, and the premise of Santa’s fantasy travel is neatly juxtaposed with the real-world concern of the violation of international borders and unregulated migration. Similarly, in Paragraph 6, Santa’s drunk driving exploits and his very existence in the air – the stuff of fancy – are given added comic value by the candidate’s tongue-in-cheek question, ‘Does old St. Nick even have the decency to let air traffic control know there will be an extra vehicle in the air that night?’ Indeed, the candidate often relates Santa’s exploits to real-world issues – the elves’ treatment mirrors the plight of sweat-shop workers; the flying reindeer are driven to near extinction. . . . Although essentially a light-hearted topic, this is a candidate with the intellectual sophistication to echo real concerns.

Many of the conventional techniques associated with discursive writing are exploited to great success in this essay. For example, the faux-outrage at Santa’s temerity is sustained throughout the piece by the candidate’s combination of the comic aside, such as ‘(and into our children’s bedrooms!)’ in Paragraph 5, the use of the exclamation mark and short declamatory sentence (‘Of course not!’ in Paragraph 6) and the question, of which there are numerous examples throughout the piece: ‘Surely there is no crueller torture for a beast than to drag a heavy sleigh, full to overflowing with toys and perched upon by a man who is not exactly light, hour after hour?’; ‘What colour are Santa’s eyes? What shape is his nose?’

The essay finishes with a sustained rallying cry to us all, and again the writer’s natural command of language is obvious from her use of varied techniques which combine to create a rousing conclusion. In keeping with the ordered structure of a more conventional discursive-type piece, the candidate’s final sentence mirrors her opening one, but this time we are urged to use the ‘most wonderful time of the year’ to ‘take a stand’ and, once and for all, eradicate Santa from our Christmas traditions. It is an effective end to what is overall a clever, entertaining and engaging piece of writing.

Despite being unconventional, this essay still has all the hallmarks of a Band 15-13 piece. There is strong attention to purpose and a real understanding of audience. It is entertaining. It’s worth noting that this is a piece written without any reference to external sources – naturally! – but is no less sophisticated and in-depth as a result. Varied language is deployed confidently and the whimsical content is effectively set against a conventional structure, enhancing the mock-gravitas of the topic and demonstrating the candidate’s clever understanding of how to manipulate language and form to create effect. This essay fully meets the criteria for Band 15-13, and is therefore awarded **15 marks**.

Candidate 8

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

Let Me Count the Ways

The candidate has chosen to write an imaginative piece, a prose monologue in Scots, spoken by a mysterious figure whose identity become clearer as the piece progresses. The title is taken from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet, 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways', which is referenced in the final paragraph. This piece displays strong attention to purpose and strong creative qualities with skilful command of the monologue form: there is a vivid sense of the speaker's personality as he engages the reader in his experiences: rueful yearning combines with genuine awe at the immensity of the universe, punctuated with moments of wry humour. Thematic concerns such as isolation, the transitory nature of life and the importance of love are developed in an understated and effective way. The writer has used Scots to create a sense of immediacy and a quality of 'everyman' in the speaker, which contrasts effectively with his role as wonderer though the stars, a mystical 'man in the moon', gazing down on earth.

The piece opens with a direct address to the reader, 'How many birds in a flock? Mair than ye kin count!' The speaker then teases the reader, drawing us into the mystery of his role and identity: ' .never wance huv Ah caught a single fish...When Ah fish, Ah fish tae catch the stars...'

There follows the memories of the speaker's enjoyment of the world in the past: the candidate uses language skilfully to create an atmosphere of life, energy and youth. Examples include the build-up of short sentences: 'Aw the sounds o'creation. It wis marvellous'; repetition: 'Ah remember...Ah could hear...Ah wid dance...' building up to the climax of 'Ah wis marvellous! and vibrant expression such as 'tastin' the lightning and spittin' oot aw the thunder'. This is contrasted with the speaker's current state of age and infirmity: 'constant creakin' noise every time Ah move', 'ma creased eyes' and 'the remains of whit used tae be ma nicest suit'. The rueful acceptance of his own frailty leads on to the assertion that, nonetheless, he will 'be aroon fir the solemn day whaur' the world 'jist ceases tae exist'. The combination of humour and seriousness recurs throughout the piece and is one of its strengths.

The reference to 'this braw shield ae light' (paragraph 5) and 'ma crescent perch' (paragraph 7) reveal that the speaker is on, or represents the moon and there follows a particularly lyrical exhortation to the reader to embrace and appreciate the immensity of the universe around us, for example 'how the blackness ae night transforms ...intae the most mesmerising blue' and 'how silver wind swirls itself aroon' the vast amount ae space'. The speaker presents the metaphysical conceit of night as both safety and danger: 'ye cin wrap yerself up intae a cocoon ae night's embrace...ye will never be mair exposed tae anything then when draped ain its dark blanket'.

This is followed by the anti-climactic, humorous account of the Apollo moon landing, with blunt description, for example 'stuck a pole' and 'Numpties' providing a marked contrast with the earlier, 'poetic' use of language. The candidate returns to a more serious style with the summary of the speaker's condition in a simple and effective 'rule of three': 'Solitary, sad and lonely' and in the celebration of the 'glorious imperfections' which he shares with the moon: 'Ah wis tarnished, craters and holes blemished ma already crumpled skin'.

The speaker describes finding love when he encountered the sun: when describing the transforming impact she had on him, his language is characterised by images of colour, brightness and joy: 'the mother of light wis illuminating her warmth an' embracing all in it', '...she wis radiant!', 'ma heart burst intae fiery red flames', 'sublime orange blaze', 'Sunlight poured from her veins'. However, the poignant and transitory nature of this happiness, as she cannot stay with him for long, is emphasised through the speaker's grief and hope, effectively conveyed in simple, powerful language: 'Some days Ah almost gave up...' yet 'Ah wid never feel the darkness ae night again. No' in the same way'.

The final paragraphs return to the task of fishing for stars, mentioned in the opening, and the speaker reveals the purpose of this: it is a pledge, with his loved one, to transform the night sky with light, to "make the face o' night so fine, that aw the world will fa' in love wae it". We learn that this "covenant" is what now gives the speaker's existence hope and meaning, counteracting any features of aging, alluded to earlier. There is a final contrast between the despair of the moon who "still cries" and the stars "who forget tae shine sae bright" with the speaker's patient optimism as he waits for their reunion "where your world will gaze in wonder at our harmonious eclipse". The speaker ends with a reference to loving "Fir all eternity...", an effective climax which leaves the reader pondering on the nature of time, isolation and love.

In conclusion, this piece demonstrates strong creative qualities and skilful command of the monologue genre throughout, with the creation of a persona whose character, thoughts and emotions are conveyed vividly to the reader through confident and varied expression. The use of Scots is effective in enhancing the realism of the speaker as a personality and it is used to lyrical and comical effect. The structure enhances meaning: the piece begins by intriguing the reader, there is the development of the persona and the turning point when he finds love; and we return to the 'fishing' idea at the end. Thematic content is developed subtly and thoughtfully. This monologue achieves the criteria for Band 15-13 and is awarded **15 marks**.

Candidate 9

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

Porphyria Speaks

The candidate has chosen to write a creative piece in the form of a poem; specifically a dramatic monologue entitled 'Porphyria Speaks'. This is a response to Robert Browning's dramatic monologue, 'Porphyria's Lover' which is spoken by the murderer of Porphyria; the candidate's poem is spoken by the murdered woman, directly addressing her killer.

The candidate demonstrates skilful command of the genre and strong creative qualities throughout, for example in creation of the persona of Porphyria; introduction and development of themes such as the nature of love, possession and objectification of the loved one; and skilful use of language to convey atmosphere and mood. The candidate's poem picks up many of the nuances of the original and we see skilful use of rhythm, language and poetic structure.

The piece follows the narrative of Browning's poem : Porphyria has left a 'great gathering' to spend time with her lover; she brings life and colour into the lover's 'frozen and alone' world by setting the fire alight and embracing him; there is a sense of their physical intimacy before and as he strangles her with her own hair; she moves from an active role: 'As I swept in' and 'I set ablaze' to passivity at the moment of her murder: 'I watched entranced'; and the poem ends with her reflection on her death as she observes her lover holding and kissing her body, now forever his.

The poem begins with the central thematic question, 'What am I to you?' which the speaker answers with two further questions: one, the only direct quotation from Browning, a 'smiling rosy little head' (description of the woman after death) and the other, in which the persona shows understanding of her own objectification: 'fantasy of an innocent to corrupt?' In this creation of the speaker's voice, the candidate combines a modern sensibility with awareness of 19th Century Romantic values. Porphyria is able to analyse their relationship and speak for herself, at the same time as celebrating the sublime, passionate and overwhelming in her love. This dichotomy is mirrored in the verse form, which in places captures Browning's iambic rhythm, 'And stole away into the night / Oh how it broke my heart to think' while elsewhere, varying line length suggests dynamic or fragmented emotional experience, for example 'I entered in'. There is repeated skilful use of enjambment, for example: 'so wrought/With horror' and 'to find/My lover...'.

We see skilful use of language, creating a strong impact, in the atmospheric description of the storm raging outside, reflecting the emotional turmoil within: 'alone and cold upon this winter's eve', 'the howling wind and pelting rain' and 'horror, grief and pain'. We sense Porphyria's transformational presence and the depth of her devotion for the lover who 'sat still/ Upon the sofa, pale and ill' while she 'ran' to him. The energy she brings is conveyed through the 'flames' which

'crackled and sputtered out of the grate...hissing and beckoning'. She addresses her lover, asserting the power of her devotion, which conquers even a sense of her doom at his hands, while simultaneously there builds up a sense of unease through the disjointed sentence structure, again reminiscent of the original: 'Called upon you? But to no avail, yet still – I persevered'. Confident poetic skill is shown in, for example, the echoing sounds of 'I thought myself lucky, blessed/ And I caressed your face and laid you head upon my breast' and in the description of the murder itself, with the use of 'Twisting, turning...charming' to convey the hypnotic nature of the moment.

The poem moves seamlessly into the final section, when Porphyria watches the ghastly reversal of their earlier active/passive behaviour: she, now 'a lifeless shell', is moved into the position of beautiful object, dependant on and controlled by the lover, who opens her eyes and rests her head on his shoulder. There is some beautifully economical and powerful use of language: 'blue eyes, icy as the storm that tore down trees nearby' and 'As though to show you cared, but now/ It seems instead, you cared for nought...'. The speaker's realisation that by murdering her, her lover has now taken possession of her, 'I could be no man's but yours' combines poignantly with the assertion that he only had to ask her for confirmation of her love. The last three lines again demonstrate the candidate's confident skill: rhyme is used to reinforce the final irony: to be sure of her love forever, he has destroyed her: 'there we sit/I told you we would be as one forever/ Is this how you ensured it?' Ending on this question effectively echoes the opening, 'What am I to you? Nothing...': in order to be everything to him, she has become nothing.

This poem is a confident and strong piece of creative writing. There is a genuine sense of the persona's voice and personality, bringing a modern perspective, and skilful use of a range of linguistic techniques to create the atmosphere of doomed love mirrored by sublime nature. Structure, in the build up to the climax of the murder and its aftermath, enhances the meaning of the piece. This is a sophisticated achievement which is placed in Band 15-13 and is awarded **15 marks**.