

# LEARNINGGUILD CERTIFICATE

## IN REASONING AND EXPRESSION

### REPORT ON THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION, MARCH 2007

#### General comments

1. All six candidates gained the Certificate at the B grade. One reached the upper B level, one had a middle B, and four a lower B.
2. In any exam, especially one of an unfamiliar kind, candidates may do themselves less than justice by not complying with the instructions at the head of a section. Section 1 required no more changes than necessary (just as one should not be so inconsiderate as to change more than necessary some writing by a colleague which he or she had asked one to look at). Section 2 had “Do not make any other changes to the text”, and so required the effort of a flexible intelligence to see how one could make sense of what was printed. Section 5 called for an essay that was, as every piece of writing needs to be, “entirely relevant to [its] topic”, and specifically gave a range of 500-800 words, as might be given for a report, or a contribution to a report, or a magazine article. An examiner, however sympathetic, must mark down non-adherence to such requirements and reward adherence.
3. The previous paragraph shows that the Learningguild exam does not impose arbitrary requirements, but ones that are valuable for one’s general writing and assistance to others and (just as important) for the development of a flexible intelligence, as well as testing and stretching one’s powers of comprehension, response and reasoning. Moreover, as most senior persons in a company know well, even though individuality and initiative in less experienced colleagues are very valuable, it is essential that they are able and willing to grasp and to do exactly what is asked (unless they have a conscientious objection).
4. The Learningguild exam has the special and unusual advantage that it is just as repeatable by those who have gained the Certificate as by those who have not. One can do better and better in it, aiming by developing one’s own powers (preferably with some guidance and encouragement, such as Learningguild is glad to provide) to reach a higher level and a higher grade. Everyone who has to write letters or reports should aim to reach at least the upper B level. Then an A, though a considerable achievement, is attainable.
5. There is no set book for the Learningguild exam. No questions will be asked of the sort “Explain with examples the meaning of ‘subordinate clause’”, such as could be answered by knowledge of *Making up Sentences* (2:4.3f). However, that book and the booklet *Reasoning*, both obtainable from Learningguild, have been written with the exam in mind, and are certainly valuable for it (the book – to which many references are given here – partly because it begins with the elements of grammar though going on to some further reaches of it). **Much can be learnt by close study of our reports.** Sir

Ernest Gowers's *The Complete Plain Words*, twice revised, is a classic, and the Penguin Reference edition of it wonderful value at about \$23, but *Making up Sentences* (from now on *MS*) explains Gowers's grammatical terms, of which most secondary education in English-speaking countries, absurdly, has left students ignorant. Other books referred to in this report are R.W.Burchfield's great achievement (1996 and since somewhat revised) which, out of respect to H.W.Fowler's book of 1926, is called *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, and the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Every serious writer should have a copy of the latter or of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (they provide the history of our words as well as their range of meanings) or, if he or she comes from a non-English background, a book such as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, with its examples of sentences and phrases in which the word under explanation is used (very valuable for native speakers too).

6. Marks in the A grade go from the very rare A and A?- down to A--- and AB. Upper Bs range down from BA and B+++ to B?+, and then, after B unqualified (a middle B), there are lower Bs from B?- to B-- and BC. There is a matching set of C marks, except that the lowest is C--. Fail marks are 'Just below C' and 'Below C'. One advantage of this traditional marking system is that it does not tempt markers to strike a simple average when what is most desirable is judgment of a kind that recognizes merit shown anywhere. Thus three marks in the A grade would get one an overall A if a serious effort had been made, without general disaster, in the other two sections.

## Section 1

All six sets of answers were given a mark in the B grade: B+ for one, B (i.e., a middle B) for another, B- for two and B-?- for two. **To get into the high Bs or the A grade in this section would help one in the rest of the exam and all of one's writing.** The best path towards getting there is to work through the six chapters of *MS* (in the manner set out fully in Part 3 of the Preface) and Appendix A, and quite often to attempt the correction of a set of sentences, as in any of the 39 papers before this one, going on wherever it is available to a set of answers and explanations, as in the reports that have been or will be produced. Directly on sentence-correction, there are references to other books or parts of books at 2.7f in Chapter Five. There are also such references on punctuation at 3.8, and on vocabulary and choice of words at 3.16.

Here is a version in which the errors in the original have been corrected.

- a) My understanding is that he will be on full pay.
- b) The impact that this remarkable leader had on Australian football can never be overestimated. (OR: should never be underestimated.)
- c) The whole interview process has become so clinical that personality is prevented from shining through.
- d) In any interview, even in universities, there are phrases you are sure to hear.
- e) The distinction between Shia and Sunni is constantly emphasized.

- f) When you're in the throes of passion, any passion, that is not the best time to make decisions.
- g) It is hard for employees to balance huge workloads and equally heavy family responsibilities.
- h) For my part, I'm uneasy about whether the habits of student boarders would be too irritating.
- i) The Head of Department has learnt to manage people as she would wish to be managed.
- j) Correct.
- k) Do not sit, stand or walk on the belt, or put fingers on or in it when it is moving.
- l) The view voters take on which person wins this shoot-out will be important to the election debate.

a) A noun clause (*MS 2:4.4*: here 'that he will be on full pay') is needed. In formal writing, that clause could begin the sentence. 'He will be on full pay' is not a set of words suitable to be a subject-locution (1:7.1). Two candidates put a semi-colon after 'full pay', and added 'that'. An acceptable sentence results, but it might be thought to make the assertion that he will be on full pay more confident than it is. One could write, after a comma, 'or so I understand'.

b) Three candidates wrote 'Correct'. There are two errors. First, the relative clause (also called an adjectival clause: 2:4.4) that runs from the relative pronoun 'that' to 'football' is, like the one just written here, of an **identifying** kind: it is not just an incidental comment, but tells us which impact is being talked about. It should therefore not have commas around it. See 4:2.5 and 5:3.10. 'That' could be omitted. Secondly, if we keep 'can' we should end with 'overestimated', but if we end with 'underestimated' we need 'should' rather than 'can'. Often sentence-correction depends on thought that is clear enough to avoid such confusion.

It is wrong to put a comma after 'football'. That is an interrupting comma (5:3.10), wrongly separating a long subject-locution from the verb it governs (1:7.14).

c) The grammar check on Learningguild's Microsoft word-processor proposes a semi-colon after 'clinical', but that change fails to preserve the probably intended meaning, i.e., that the **result** of a process that has become extremely "clinical" is that personality does not "shine through". So we need 'that' (here a conjunction), and no comma, to obtain an adverbial clause of result to match the adverb 'so'. On types of adverbial phrase and clause, see 6:2.4.

Only one candidate moved away from the verb 'refrain'. It cannot be used in the passive, as the apt verb here, 'prevent', can be, because it is a verb used only **intransitively**, as in 'He refrained from smoking'. The distinction, a fundamental one, between transitive and intransitive uses of verbs (some can be used in both ways) is set out at 3:3.1, and that paragraph should be read in association with the rest of the section, especially paras 2, 5 and 7. A verb used transitively, and so usable in the

passive, is ‘obscure’, but then one would end this sentence with ‘personality is obscured’. One candidate used ‘restricted’ instead of ‘refrained’, and ‘restrict’ is a verb used transitively, but, unlike ‘stop’, not with the preposition ‘from’: A restricts B’s freedom of action, or restricts her **in** a certain respect, e.g., in her sporting activities. Another followed ‘so clinical’ with a comma and ‘which refrains personality’. There the verb is still used wrongly, because transitively, and there is no word or phrase earlier in the sentence to serve as a proper antecedent (4:2.2) for the relative pronoun ‘which’.

d) ‘Including’ is used here as a preposition, and so should not be used (though it often is) before a prepositional phrase such as ‘in universities’. (Burchfield, at his entry on the word, notes the recency of such a use of it, and ends “Will the type become established? Time will tell.” He is wrong to equate it in such a use with ‘as well as’, which could not be substituted for it in our erroneous sentence.) One could either use instead the adverb ‘even’ or follow ‘including’ with ‘those’, which is the plural of ‘that’ and would here be a demonstrative pronoun (2:1.7f). In mid-sentence there must be a **pair** of commas around such a phrase as ‘even in universities’, rather than just one comma (Appendix A: P/C Pair). The word ‘universities’ should have no capital here because it is used as a common noun, not as a name or part of a name (1:4.3; 5:3.13). The verb ‘guarantee’ is not used with ‘of’. Someone might say “I guarantee you’ll hear ...”, and so, using the passive (3:3.5), ‘you are guaranteed to hear’; but the more likely and reasonable wording is ‘you’re sure to hear ...’. One candidate wrote ‘you are bound to hear common phrases’. That was an unnecessarily extensive change, and the using of both ‘bound’ and ‘common’ is pleonasm, the use of a word or phrase whose meaning is already implied by another. It would be acceptable to put ‘there are phrases you are bound to hear’.

e) The fundamental point here is that ‘between’ is used with ‘and’, not with ‘or’, which all six candidates left unchanged. (Both Gowers, at (v) on p.108f, and Burchfield can valuably to be consulted on ‘between’.) We say ‘We must choose either X or Y’, but ‘The choice is between X and Y.’ There is nothing wrong in itself with the wording ‘a person’s being a Shia’, where ‘being’ is a gerund (3:5.6) and therefore preceded by a possessive form, but it is intolerably prolix to have ‘between a person’s being a Shia and his or her being a Sunni’. ‘Their’ or just ‘his’ instead of ‘his or her’ is scarcely an improvement (4:2.10). Though both ‘Shia’ and ‘Sunni’, when used as nouns, would normally have an introductory word such as ‘a’ (1:5.6), it is possible to employ them alone when one is speaking generally, just as we can say “The little girl has mastered the use of knife, fork and spoon.”

f) Two candidates knew the spelling of ‘throes’, the word needed here. It is always used in the plural. The *OALD* gives examples of its more and its less serious uses: “*be in the throes of childbirth/of moving house*”.

Every candidate put in an ‘it’, which provided a suitable subject-location (1:7.1) for the verb ‘is’. ‘When you’re in the throes of passion’ is not suitable, and better used, as in the version above, as an adverbial clause (2:4.3f). The ‘that’ in the same version is a demonstrative pronoun (2:1.7f), but the above-mentioned grammar check, picking up the comma before it, reacts as though the ‘that’ were a relative pronoun and advises one of the combinations ‘passion that’ or ‘passion, which’. Neither makes sense here! As is evident from some “corrections” of appropriate passive forms, resort to a computer’s grammar check is no substitute for an understanding of grammar.

g) ‘Equally heavy’ avoids both the mistake of ‘equally as’ (see Gowers p.225) and the over-excited use of ‘enormous’. The only candidate who kept ‘as’ after ‘equally’ replaced ‘enormous’ well by ‘large’. Five candidates inserted a hyphen into ‘workload’, but the *Shorter Oxford* has no hyphen in the word.

h) See Burchfield at ‘behalf’ on the mistake of using ‘On A’s behalf’ as though it were a variant of ‘on A’s part’. One could, however, imagine someone saying here ‘On my own behalf’, indicating his or her concern for his or her own welfare. One candidate sensibly wrote ‘Personally’, and two not unreasonably omitted ‘On my behalf’ as redundant. Only one candidate made the error of retaining the question mark at the end of a statement in which a question is “embedded” (5:3.9).

It seems that the verb ‘board’, as in ‘I’m going to board with a friend of my mother’s’, with the meaning of ‘I’m going to be a paying guest of ...’, and even the noun ‘boarder’, though it is still used of resident students in boarding schools, are less familiar than they once were. Here one needs to choose between ‘a student boarder’s habits’ and ‘student boarders’ habits’, or else to say ‘the habits of a student boarder/student boarders’. It can be seen that ‘border’, as noun or as verb, made no sense here, prompting the (sympathetic) question “What is the word that the writer might here have misspelt?”

i) It is likely that ‘Head of Department’ is needed as the title of this particular person (as against a mere description of her role: 1:4.3). It is not that she wants to be managed in a certain way: she **would** wish, or want, to be managed in that way **if** she were (as she is not) in a less senior position. That is a counterfactual conditional, and it is expressed with some formality, which makes ‘as’ (used as a conjunction, in preference to ‘like’) even more appropriate than it would anyway be. Burchfield is more permissive than Gowers (p.104) on the use of ‘like’ as a conjunction.

j) This sentence is correct, as three candidates said. *Jones’s* is preferable to *Jones’* (5:3.12). One candidate moved away at three points from the meaning by writing ‘The Professor’s testimonial mitigates Dr Jones’s disappointment.’ There is nothing wrong with ‘His professors’ testimonials’ (i.e. the testimonials provided by his professors). It is very important, as when one is asked to look over a document written by a colleague, to seek to ascertain, and not to change, the intended meaning of the original.

k) The wording of the original sentence was noticed by the examiner in December 2006 at Logan Airport, Boston. Sitting, standing and walking, in this case, can only be **on** the belt, and sticking fingers only **in** it. The verb ‘touch’ is used transitively (though sometimes with an object-locution implied, as in a notice “Don’t touch” put next to something), not intransitively with a preposition. (See the references provided in the middle of c in this section of the report.) Moreover, though the version given above is six words longer, it gets to the key word ‘belt’ sooner, and so does not suggest either (initially) that sitting, standing or walking in the vicinity is prohibited or that it is all right to sit, stand or walk on the belt provided that it is not moving.

l) Only one candidate realized that what would be important in the election debate was not the **person** judged by the future voters to be the winner on this earlier occasion but that early **judgment** itself. Two candidates kept ‘Whomever’ and one varied it to the unknown ‘Whom-ever’. One changed to ‘Whoever’ but then changed the next word to ‘Voter’s’. Suppose one did want to use a relative clause to identify the person who won the “shootout”. The ‘ever’ would hardly be needed if there were just two contestants. One could use an infinitive with ‘whom’ in, e.g., ‘The person whom voters

judge to be the winner of ...’, but if ‘wins’ is kept then ‘voters judge’ is **parenthetical** and we must have a subject-locution for ‘wins’, and so ‘Whoever voters judge wins ...’ would be correct. (See 4:2.6.) The original sentence was erroneously constructed by the chief political correspondent of Melbourne’s *The Age* (22 March 2007): she would very seldom go wrong in such a way. The error and the Logan Airport one at k illustrate very well the need we all have to be clear about, and make clear, just what we want to say.

## Section 2

There were two marks at the upper B level (B++?+, B+?+), one at the lower B (B-), one at C- and two at Just below C.

Here is the passage as Katherine Graham punctuated it:

A reaction to Nixon came in the form of the biggest antiwar rally ever held in Washington. When asked for his response to it, Nixon said he had been watching football, a reaction that the *Post* compared to Marie-Antoinette’s “Let them eat cake.” The following week, Vice-President Agnew selected the *Post* for particular attention, saying in a speech that we were “an example of a trend toward monopolization.” He was not recommending the dismemberment of The Washington Post Company, he emphasized, but “merely pointing out that the public should be aware that these four powerful voices” – he counted our all-news radio station, along with the *Post*, *Newsweek*, and our television stations – “harken to the same master.” When I first heard his allegation that all the branches of the company answered to one voice – mine – I was flabbergasted at such a lack of understanding.

The primary need in dealing with an unpunctuated passage is to make it into a set of complete and coherent sentences. That is a valuable test of intelligence and “uptake”, as well as of one’s knowledge of sentence-construction and punctuation. One candidate put a stop after ‘emphasized’, which yielded a sentence so ending, but no proper sentence following. Two had a stop after ‘aware’, when for good sense and sentence-construction it was necessary to continue into a noun clause: ‘that these four powerful voices ... harken to the same master’. It is evident that it is worth developing one’s powers of uptake and sentence-construction. It is also important to learn where quotation marks are needed or allowable, and where they are not: they are often

misplaced in essays or reports. Skill in punctuation can be developed initially by studying various guides (see *MS* 5:3.8-10, which includes references, and the Punctuation section of Appendix A), and then by close attention to passages well punctuated, and by self-critical experiment. Much can be gained from the study of this section in our previous papers, and from the reports available thus far on particular exams.

In a passage such as this, in which candidates have to insert pairs of double inverted commas as quotation marks (1:3.2), those marks should surround only sets of words which the original writer must have quoted, or which a candidate can reasonably think of as possibly quoted. The only words that **had** to have such marks were ‘Let them eat cake’ and then the pair ‘these four powerful voices’ and ‘harken to the same master’, which must be Agnew’s. The use of ‘merely’ makes likely that it and the words between it and ‘these four powerful voices’ are also Agnew’s. Katherine Graham merely reports his view in the last sentence, as the past tense of ‘answered’ shows, by contrast with his present tense in ‘harken’. Nixon’s words are likely to have been ‘I was watching football’, and ‘he’ could certainly not go into inverted commas (in the modern use of them, by contrast, say, with John Wesley’s in the eighteenth century). One could put ‘watching football’ into inverted commas, but that is not necessary. Some or all of the set of words ‘an example of a trend towards monopolization’ could, since one could not be sure they were Agnew’s, be left without inverted commas, and ‘not recommending the dismemberment of The Washington Post Company’ could be given them if one supposed they were his. It was essential not to present as quoted either the words ‘we were’ or what could only be Graham’s explanatory insertions, first from ‘he counted’ to ‘stations’, and secondly ‘mine’. There dashes are used by her in each case, and brackets would be acceptable. (A bracket or dash should not be preceded by a comma.)

One candidate did not adhere to the instruction “Do not make any other changes to the text”, inserting bracketed numerals in the words preceded by ‘he counted’ and changing ‘mine I was’ to ‘all were’. Added to mistakes over insertion of inverted commas and a stop after ‘aware’, that prevented the candidate from gaining a C for this section. The exercise is to make sense of, and punctuate, the passage **as it stands**: it is in Section 1 that one makes corrections where (and only where) they are necessary. Every candidate inserted a hyphen into ‘antiwar’, and that was not held against them, but if Graham had had a hyphen ‘anti’ and ‘war’ would have been printed separately on the exam paper, just as the three pairs needing a hyphen have been. Familiarity sometimes results in the dropping of a hyphen (see the end of the first paragraph of Burchfield’s valuable entry at ‘hyphens’), and ‘antiwar’ has therefore been more likely to be found in the US than in Britain or Australia in recent years.

The examiner’s introduction to the passage showed how the words ‘the washington post company’ should be handled. Elsewhere ‘post’, like ‘newsweek’, required italics and a capital. Thus we show, if the reference is to a printed work, that it is a book or newspaper or magazine (as against an article or chapter, whose title would go into inverted commas).

After ‘monopolization’ and ‘master’, Graham puts a final pair of double inverted commas outside the full stop, even though the words quoted do not make up a full sentence. Burchfield notes this American divergence from the practice of Oxford University Press, which he describes in detail in his entry at ‘quotation marks’.

A comma between ‘Nixon’ and ‘came’ is quite unjustifiable: it is an interrupting one (5:3.10 and P/C Int in Appendix A). To make a sentence of the words from ‘a reaction’ to ‘cake’ is to produce without justification an abnormal one (read 3:1 on normal and abnormal sentences).

### Section 3

There were two upper B marks (one very high at B+++), one in the middle of that range at B+?+), one at B, and three at lower B (B-, B-?-, B--).

The most successful candidate, though writing so much more than the suggested amounts as to endanger doing enough on other sections, made good use of an incident in a junior football club to throw light on judgment and insight, and wrote well about the connection between lack of insight and lack of awareness of people around one.

In general, candidates showed insufficient precision of understanding and expression to do really well in this section. For example, ‘unquantitative’ was not properly explained: a grasp of its form and its context would lead one to give it a meaning similar to that of ‘not thinking in terms of quantities’. That is one way of underestimating the difficulty of some proposed course of action. One candidate wrote:

Malleable as used by Snow would suggest that Churchill liked to change the facts to suit himself. However, as indicated in the text “... brute facts of life ...” this is not possible in every day life.”

That does not explain the word ‘malleable’ itself. One needs to say something of this sort: to be malleable is to be susceptible of change of shape, as some metals are, or, in the metaphorical use employed here (cf. the noun ‘manipulation’), as voters’ opinions can be when fed with plausible untruths. In the sentences just quoted, the word ‘malleable’ needs to be marked off with underlining or inverted commas (*MS* 1:3.2) and the adjective ‘everyday’ should be employed. Readers may decide where to add one or more commas and a pair of brackets.

Question ii was not easy. Almost certainly ‘conservative England’ does not imply that the English were in general a conservative people, but is a reference to those who were on the conservative side of politics. One might say:

Those “on the left” were those on the side of politics that favoured socialism, i.e., more control of national life by the State, or other radical change, and those called conservative were those who opposed any such change to the established ways of doing things.

‘More progressive’ is not specific enough for ‘on the left’ in this context.

Questions iii and iv required a clear distinction between judgment and insight. Snow draws the distinction but does not explain it. One might say that a person has judgment or good judgment when he or she can respond to a set of relevant facts, perhaps constituting a difficult situation, sensibly and without exaggerating the importance of any subset, so as to be able to propose or agree to a measured and

proportionate response. By contrast insight is the ability to see further than the set of facts one knows, and to recognize something of what underlies them (what fears or suspicions, what hopes, what needs, what possibilities for good or harm) when that is not at all obvious. As the best answer put it,

‘Insight’ can include the use of an individual’s ability to ‘read into’ situations, assess others’ needs, discern differences in body language ....

Judgment can be developed by experience but also by discussion, which, as Mill says in the seventh paragraph of Chapter Two of *Liberty*, is needed if experience is to be properly understood. Insight is much harder to develop. However, as the words just quoted suggest, its development is aided by an observant sympathy and a willingness to ask oneself “what is going on” when someone acts or reacts as he or she does, and not to be content with a superficial answer. One might add, by the way, that it is evident that there needs to be more of both judgment and insight in business, education, politics, serious enquiry, and personal life.

#### Section 4

Only one candidate gained an upper B (B++). Three received a lower B (B-, B-?-, BC), and two an upper C (CB, C+++).

Candidates did receive credit for noticing that Mary certainly does question Professor Davis’s talk of “a **long tradition** of ensuring its academic programs remain relevant to students and to their future employers”. However, Mary’s immediately following words do not imply that the **University of Melbourne**, of which Davis is writing, has not had that tradition: she writes of “universities generally” and might be prepared to accept Davis’s assurance, perhaps with surprise, and make an exception of Melbourne. But the main thing to be noticed, on the basis not just of the passage as a whole but of Mary’s first two sentences in response to Davis, is that she is **heartily in accord** with his view of the importance of that ensuring. Consider the approving words she uses in “such explicit reference to employers” and “But how sensible to give them such prominence.” Mary’s **view**, on which candidates needed to be clear if they were to answer either part of Section 4 really well, is that, as she explicitly says, “the aim of any [university] course ought to be to equip [students] to impress [potential employers]”. At the end she goes so far as to say, also, that research is likely to be a waste of time if no employer will fund it.

What morals may we draw from the fact that three of the six candidates did not get on to that? Two, of quite different kinds. One is that it really is very important to get practice in summarizing accurately someone’s stated view (or the situation of a client), not leaping to conclusions from a few early words. Senior secondary English used to require what was called **précis**, in which students were expected to reduce a passage to about a third of its length in such a way as to preserve its main points and general nature. That is still a valuable exercise. A similar one is to discuss with a friend how one might summarize some editorial or opinion piece in a serious newspaper. (In such exercises it is often necessary to look out for any short passages in which **someone else’s** view is being put, without an obvious “flag” that it’s not the

author's: see the extract from J.S.Mill in Section 3 of the March 1993 exam, and then the report.)

The other moral is that it needs to be realized that comparatively few university graduates in recent years have had abundant opportunity to experience the best of a university that **has** offered to its members an education which, though by no means irrelevant to their future employment, is in itself enjoyable and intellectually developmental, and awakens lifelong interests not confined to such employment. The markers kept that in mind in their decisions on marks: what might seem a platitude to many in a more fortunate earlier generation might be unfamiliar to a later one undertaking courses in universities with less opportunity to talk with staff or even, at leisure, with other students. Still, candidates might reasonably be expected to notice and be suspicious of Mary's utter dismissal as "rhetoric" three phrases which do in fact express some very valuable aspects of human life, and, as Mary says, have been commonly heard in universities.

i. It was necessary here to look closely at the words quoted from Davis and desirable to see that the question doesn't admit of an entirely simple answer. Here is a suggested answer, in 49 words:

His words 'relevant to students and to their future employers' leave open the possibility that Prof. Davis could say he meant a relevance to students wider than just their prospects of eventual employment. However, without such explication, his words are liable to be interpreted as suggesting Mary's narrower view.

ii. The candidate who did best in Section 4 answered crisply that "Universities aim to provide a level of knowledge to each student to ensure they have a basic understanding of [a particular] field when they enter the workforce", and then, in disagreeing with Mary, added that "the ability of impressing potential employers" was learnt elsewhere (in particular, through applying for casual jobs), and that it is up to an employer to "groom" a candidate whose university education has rightly not concerned itself with such grooming. One might prefer a recognition that understanding, and the ability to achieve it for oneself, does not come about by the provision of knowledge alone (but more by learning to appreciate, formulate, and deal with perceptive questions), and incidentally correct 'the ability of impressing' to 'the ability to impress'; but the candidate's making of those three points, covering a good deal of ground, was impressive.

Another candidate proposed as an alternative to Mary's view one that combined attention to preparation for employment with wider learning and engagement in research. This candidate did not, however, preserve as separate the two parts of this question. A candidate who did, and saw the relevance to the question of the "rhetoric" quoted, spoiled the answer by ending with a lack of balance, saying that universities should be "providing students with solely those skills necessary to become a suitable employee".

One might formulate a position opposed to that of Mary as follows:

It has been argued that the main role of a university is not to prepare students for specific modes of employment, but rather to conserve (and equip at least some of its students to add to) a base of enquiry, debate,

knowledge and understanding painfully acquired by human experience, experiment and thought over millennia. Such a base is valuable in and of itself. Moreover, universities are rightly expected to enrich a society by graduating men and women who can think objectively about issues faced by that society and, perhaps, rationally persuade their fellow-citizens so to think. Finally, a person enjoying a university education should, it has been argued, be a person equipped to appreciate at least one component of what one might call the “culture” of his or her society – perhaps even of societies other than his or her own.

Mary’s last two paragraphs were initially thought by one of us to be a deliberate reduction to absurdity of the position she was setting out. “Students ready with placards” in case the lecturer drifted away from job-preparation! One might respond to her position (she does not present an argument but a series of assertions) by predicting what is likely to happen if universities operate in accordance with her view, and might hope that such a prediction is accepted as a reduction to absurdity.

Non-vocational courses at Australian universities – in pure mathematics, philosophy, literature, languages, history etc. – will in the near future receive decreasing funds. The number of able lecturers, tutors and research workers employed in these disciplines will therefore decrease. More and more courses of a vocational nature, leading to a Bachelor of Applied Science (in this or that), will proliferate. A decreasing number of graduates will be able to express their opinions and beliefs clearly and coherently, think critically and argue cogently, and enjoy participation in the manifold delights of a culture that human beings over countless generations have created.

Some candidates’ work suggests the need to give more attention to **transitions** between the paragraphs and sentences of an essay or argument. For example, one might follow a paragraph that outlined one view with a paragraph beginning “I find this viewpoint unconvincing.” The next sentence might commence “First, the viewpoint in question fails to acknowledge that ...”, and the next with “In addition, the viewpoint outlined presupposes that ...”. We should take our intended readers with us as we make our way from one major point to the next, from paragraph to paragraph, rather than condemning them to a bumpy ride, lurching from one paragraph to an unrelated successor.

Some points of grammar. ‘He would not of wanted’ has a basic mistake: ‘of’ is a preposition, ‘have’ is the second auxiliary required in the three-word verb (*MS* 1:7.4). ‘However’, generally simply an adverb, should not be used after a comma instead of the conjunction ‘but’. The set of words, followed by a full stop, ‘Where as Mary believes that this link needs to be further implemented’ should begin with the one word ‘Whereas’ and be used as a subordinate clause, attached to words that have the backbone verb(s) of a proper sentence (2:4.3-5). Apostrophes were misused in ‘different student’s needs’, ‘lecturer’s teach students’, and ‘see’s’. (5:3.12 summarizes the uses of apostrophes.) In ‘Personally I believe there needs to be a balance, Universities need to produce job ready candidates’, there are three mistakes. (See 5:3.10 and P/C Inad in Appendix A; 1:4.3; and 2:1.5.) The set of words ‘which have and will continue’ is unacceptable: see 3:7.12.

The verbs ‘argue’ and ‘question’ are used differently: ‘I would argue that ...’, but ‘I would question whether ...’. ‘Pursuit’ is the noun, but ‘pursue’ the verb. ‘Phenomena’, like ‘criteria’, is a plural word: the singular of these Greek words ends in *on*. Misspellings included ‘encorporate’, ‘diseases’, ‘choosen’ and ‘choose’ (for ‘chose’), and ‘knowledgable’.

## Section 5

Marks here were B+?+, B-?-, BC (for two candidates), C- and Just below C.

Three propositions need to be accepted by anyone wishing to do well in this section. First, an essay must satisfy the stated requirements, which are constant and spelt out fully and clearly in the instruction. Secondly, apart from that of 500-800 words (though conciseness is always good), these are valuable requirements, applicable to any expository writing. Thirdly, it is of course advisable to choose, out of the wide range of twenty, a topic which one is well able to handle with “an appropriate range of factors and considerations”.

Three recommendations are offered to anyone asking how one can learn to write a really good essay. First, **read**, mark and reread the lengthy guidance given in Section 5 of our reports for March and September 2004, especially on pp. 13-15 of the former and p.16 of the latter. (Other reports might also be consulted.) Secondly, **discuss** with someone else questions that interest you from our exam papers, and any other questions you like (first formulating them clearly), and think about what structure you’d give to an essay on a particular topic, given its wording. (Attention to structure is vital: see, in the General section of Appendix A in *MS*, D-sheet, SA, and S Int.) Thirdly, **write** some essays of the required kind and ask for comments on them.

Two essays were written on topic B, and one each on E, G, K and N. One of the essays on B was very short and neither had a wide range (the question was not just about one’s own preferred diet). The longer essay had three instances of the common error in which a set of words that can only be a subordinate clause is made an entire sentence. In this essay the sets began with ‘Although’, ‘As’ and ‘Whether’; the same error is mentioned near the foot of the previous page, and a reference given. The candidate who wrote about the war in Iraq did not provide balance by considering objections to the view that “the US cannot afford to lose in Iraq”. The essay on G had to fail because only in the last paragraph did the writer get to a particular way (just one) of assisting somebody to gain confidence. The best essay, on K, did not focus sufficiently on “the **balance** between **instruction** and **exploration**” (emphasis added), providing rather a good but not sufficiently relevant contrast between unadventurous teachers and innovative ones who allow students to choose their own topics and styles of work. A wide range of considerations was presented on water conservation, but the essay had errors of spelling and weaknesses of sentence-construction. Much can be gained by noting the deficiencies listed in this paragraph and practising the writing of essays free from them.

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(This examination was taken in June.)

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Vennix, Cindy

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