

WRITING | QUESTION 1

Question 1

Candidate A

Behavioural Change

Our modern life often poses us a question – what is acceptable in terms of behaviour considering the fast pace at which modern society changes. Besides, the shift towards the cult of individuality has been obvious for the past years.

Nowadays, we are all aware of the fact that society is made up of different generations each of which has their own preferences and habits deeply ingrained in their consciousness. In this connection the generation gap is considered to be a perennial problem. It is a well-known fact younger generations are more technologically advanced than the previous ones, moreover the young are quicker on the uptake and more resilient to ever changing demands of our life. Despite that, I am inclined to believe that only by being tolerant to each other and accepting the right of each generation to adhere to their own set of beliefs and ideas we will be able to peacefully co-exist in society.

At last society has recognised the need for each member to be an individual. Throughout the history of humanity members of society have had to fit the mould and conform to the set of principles and beliefs accepted. For example, even 50 years ago woman's only domain was household chores. Nowadays, we are relieved to see that women are equal members of society fulfilling their potential and rising thru the ranks. Some of them even manage to achieve dizzy heights.

In conclusion, our society is moving forward by leaps and bounds, patterns of behaviour and social norms are changing as well. So, only by coming to terms with the above-mentioned we, all members of it, won't be deemed as misfits and relish our existence in the society.

Examiner comments

Subscale	Mark	Commentary
Content	4	All content is relevant to the task, although the final key point is not addressed. Nevertheless, the target reader would be informed.
Communicative Achievement	3	Uses the conventions of the essay with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease and fulfilling all communicative purposes as set out in the task. The register is occasionally uneven (<i>rising thru the ranks, dizzy heights</i>).
Organisation	3	The text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility (<i>In this connection, the above-mentioned, moreover, For example, Throughout the history of humanity</i>) though <i>Despite that</i> does not seem to be employed correctly.
Language	2	A wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, is used effectively, and sometimes with style (<i>deeply ingrained in their consciousness, perennial problem, quicker on the uptake, adhere to their own set of beliefs, fit the mould, fulfilling their potential, by leaps and bounds, social norms, coming to terms</i>). Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility. Grammatical and lexical errors are present but do not impede communication.

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Question 1

Candidate B

The term 'society' describes a group of people having something in common – a birdwatchers' society shares a pastime, society in a more general rather more sociological sense shares a set of values. So, by definition, a certain degree of conformity is needed: If no-one adhered to such values (or nobody shared the pastime) there would be no society. However, conforming to social norms, meant to uphold the values, requires these to be meaningful and the meaning of norms will change just like the people making up a society will change. After all, the norms are just a reflection of the people living according to them. Consequently, adherence for adherence's sake is wrong and this is where individuality comes into play. Norms have to be critically reviewed, lest they become stifling. So indeed, conformity does not bring about progress. Yet individuality has to take into account others' individuality as well, that is to say, one's own ends where that of others begins. While this limits the degree of individuality of any single person within a society, it allows society to exist as such in the face of individuality. Just as individuality – being, being treated as and seeing oneself as an individual – is vital for a person's health, so it is for society, which should be made up of healthy individuals. Older individuals might disagree with younger ones about which values bear which weight or indeed about which values they share at all. This might be due to values having changed between the time when the older ones were raised and 'imprinted' with values and the time when that was the case for younger ones. But it might also be that the actual values (norms) haven't changed that much but are rather expressed differently. Most of the time, norms drift rather than leapfrog towards new meaning. Still, the perception is a disagreement. The rise of electronic equipment in public places illustrates this. Whereas older people might consider it unacceptable, it is normal for younger ones. Yet at the heart of the matter is not the issue whether such devices are used or not but how – sensitively and with respect for others, or not. And I think that most people would agree that sometimes they do not want to be disturbed – and that is the value that is still shared. In everyday life, such disagreement can only be resolved by communicating. Communication is a two-way process and, as such, requires understanding, awareness and respect for other people's views.

Examiner comments

Subscale	Mark	Commentary
Content	5	Target reader is fully informed. All content is relevant to the task.
Communicative Achievement	4	Uses the conventions of the essay to communicate complex ideas in an effective and convincing way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.
Organisation	4	Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a wide variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility (<i>The term 'society' describes ... , So, by definition, However, Consequently, Yet, Whereas, Yet at the heart of the matter is not ...</i>). Clear paragraphing would have enhanced coherence further.
Language	5	Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication and style (<i>in a ... sociological sense, individuality comes into play, critically reviewed, stifling, leapfrog towards</i>). Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and natural (<i>Just as ... so it is for, But it might also be that ...</i>). Any inaccuracies occur only as slips (<i>being, being</i>).

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Question 1

Candidate C

The over-arching theme of these two texts is social behaviour.

The first considers the fact that different groups of society have different ideas about what is acceptable behaviour. What is normal for one set of people may appear rude to another group. This text makes the point that it is important to appreciate that others may have differing viewpoints, claiming that such awareness can help to avoid social conflicts. The second text looks at the issue from a contrasting angle. It argues against the desirability of behaving in socially acceptable ways. Its contention is that being too concerned about social conventions stifles individuality and may even have a negative effect on our own psychological health.

In my opinion, there is little to disagree with in the first text. It is an undeniable fact that behavioural norms vary across generations, classes and cultures and it is also true that understanding and tolerance provide the soundest basis for our approach to social difference.

The second text is possibly more contentious. While it may be the case that some people are over-concerned about etiquette and unimportant social rules, I feel that some conventions for social behaviour have a positive impact on everyone's lives. It all depends on the type of rule. I do not feel that it is important to know which way you 'should' tip your bowl when eating soup or when you should or shouldn't wear gloves but I do think it is desirable to say please and thank you and to behave in a considerate way towards one's fellows. In other words, I think that basic social conventions serve a useful purpose but that they should be used to oil our interactions rather than becoming too much of an end in themselves.

Examiner comments

Subscale	Mark	Commentary
Content	5	Target reader is fully informed. All content is relevant to the task.
Communicative Achievement	4	Uses conventions of the essay to communicate complex ideas in an effective and convincing way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.
Organisation	4	Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a wide range of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.
Language	5	Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication and style (<i>over-arching theme, differing viewpoints, contentious, an end in themselves</i>). Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and completely natural.

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Question 1

Candidate D

How should we behave in society? Should we follow social norms or should we use our own individual judgement to decide what is the appropriate way to conduct ourselves?

Some people find it very important to obey the rules of etiquette, to do what others consider proper. There are people – often the older generation – who get very upset when others do not follow social conventions, when they, for example, speak loudly on mobile phones in public places or lick their fingers or queue jump.

However, it should be noted that the things that irritate people will vary from one society to the next; the rules of queue behaviour, for instance, are very different in London, Moscow and Istanbul, and how it is acceptable to use a mobile phone differs considerably from one society to the next. Similarly, it is important to remember that social conventions change over time. It was once considered improper to eat on the street but now no-one pays the slightest attention to someone walking along munching a sandwich or an apple. The key to avoiding conflict, it seems, is imaginative empathy.

In general, it is counter-productive to worry too much about what the socially acceptable way to behave might be in any given situation. It can stop you thinking about what is the moral way to behave as you may become more focused on what is 'proper' rather than on what is right. You can also start suppressing your own important individuality and originality as you become unhealthily anxious about what others might be thinking.

The rules that do not – and should not – change are those regarding behaviour that has an effect on others. Dropping litter, for example, or pushing someone out of the way should always be condemned as inappropriate behaviour

Examiner comments

Subscale	Mark	Commentary
Content	5	Target reader is fully informed. All content is relevant to the task.
Communicative Achievement	5	Demonstrates complete command of the conventions of the essay. Communicates complex ideas in an effective and convincing way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes. Effective use of opening question to engage the reader's attention.
Organisation	5	Text is organised impressively and coherently using a wide range of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with complete flexibility (<i>Some people ... , However, Similarly, The key ... , In general</i>). Paragraph divisions clearly support the internal organisation of the argument, which integrates evaluation of key points and writer's own views subtly and fluently. Opening question clearly addressed and returned to in the conclusion.
Language	5	Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication and style (<i>social norms, conduct ourselves, obey the rules of etiquette, imaginative empathy, unhealthily anxious, inappropriate behaviour</i>). Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and completely natural.