Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/32**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2015**

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Reading Booklet Insert contains the reading passage for use with **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

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Read the magazine article carefully, and then answer **Section 1 Question 1** on the Question Paper.

Optimism is an essential ingredient for success – but can you teach it?

We all judge our friends and family all the time, in different ways – by the music they like, the clothes they wear, whether they're outgoing or reserved, serious or happy-go-lucky. But did you know that some global companies classify their potential high-flying, young graduate recruits as optimistic or pessimistic, and that they favour those who have a more optimistic outlook?

Some business leaders have identified optimists as being more open to new ideas, more willing to try out new ways of working. 'Optimists are better at bouncing back after setbacks and more focused on working hard to achieve their goals,' one manager told us. 'If you want to make changes in your company or be more efficient, an optimist will look for ways to make it work, not give you reasons why it can't.'

One study discovered that salespeople who were characteristically optimistic sold over a third more than their pessimistic counterparts. What's more, optimists are less likely to need time off for illness, while pessimists are twice as likely to quit their jobs in the first year. Pessimism is expensive! Employers who spend money to train young people in today's tough economic climate are looking for ways to ensure their investment is transformed into profits. The optimism of potential recruits, not just their academic credentials, is seen by some companies as a short-cut to business success.

Of course, you might be thinking how unfair it is that after all the sacrifices made for a good education, your future might be limited by a personality trait that you can't change. Surely it's better to be realistic than optimistic? The cautiousness of pessimists is also needed for making decisions in the boardroom, perhaps, as well as in everyday life. One local company boss was more sceptical. 'Optimism needs to have its basis in confidence and ability, not bravado,' he said. 'We all like happy colleagues, but it's good qualifications, hard work and loyalty that I prize.'

But what if, as studies have shown, your natural pessimism holds you back at school? A local teacher, Mrs Suarez, talked about the damage pessimism can have on her students. 'Intelligent, hard-working students can be knocked off course when they have a bad test result or when they struggle in one area of their studies. They highlight every little setback and that attitude can halt their progress.' She recognises that teachers have a part to play in encouraging students not to dwell on failures. 'But we can't change people's personalities in some futile attempt to improve results, and there's no spare time in a good academic curriculum in any case,' she warned. 'Some students just have to accept that they're not good enough and no amount of optimism is going to change that.'

In contrast with her views, another local college offers lessons in optimism in the first term of students' IGCSE work. 'Optimism is an untapped resource which can improve the performance of all students,' the course teacher, Mr Paul, told us. 'Students who were previously crippled by the fear of failure can learn to regard setbacks as temporary, to move on and reach their potential.' He teaches strategies to help students focus on their successes, to try out more effective ways of learning and be more open to advice. Optimism can be harnessed for success, according to Mr Paul, and he understands why those big companies prefer to recruit optimists. 'There are tangible benefits, in school and beyond, for young people who have had optimism training. Just ask the teachers in this college about the difference it's made in their lessons!'

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