Cambridge Assessment International Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2020**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **4** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

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Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A

The post below is from an online education forum in which a Headteacher argues for study exchange visits to different countries by teenagers.

Many people in my country believe that study exchange visits by students to other countries have limited educational value and offer little more than brief holidays subsidised by parents and their often cash-strapped schools. Some say that older students need every minute in their own schools to give them a chance of success in higher education and a competitive workplace in the future.

In my school, however, we've recently instigated an ambitious programme of exchange visits where students in the second term of their course can spend a few weeks living and studying in a different country, while keeping up with some of their home school's work online. It's proving incredibly popular. Students apply to spend four weeks studying in a partner school overseas. They have to show enough maturity and sense of responsibility to represent their school and their country, as well as benefit from the experience personally.

If we choose carefully, our students return from their exchange visits enriched by exposure to new cultures and different educational methods and principles. One of our brightest 14-year-olds recently returned from a four-week visit to study in a school overseas where the resources available reflected the country's struggling economy. She learned that the teacher, not the shiny gadgetry, is the key to effective learning. Other students have returned with aspirations to work in the countries they visited, fuelling their ambition and drive to succeed.

There is more to educating our students than stuffing their heads with facts and knowledge. The opportunities provided by study exchange visits – to develop young people's personalities, resilience and sense of adventure – cannot be replicated in the classroom. We've had young people return from studying in other countries with renewed motivation and enthusiasm, more tolerant and open-minded about the wider world. Now, that's what I call education!

Text B

This post was written by another Headteacher in response to the Headteacher in Text A.

It's said that travel broadens the mind and maybe it does. I don't believe, however, that a school should compromise on its primary role which is to equip students with the skills and knowledge to do well for themselves, their families and their communities in later life.

A lot of learning happens in four weeks, and the huge time and effort involved in vetting host families, planning and preparing for a lengthy exchange visit is very costly in teacher time. It's also a very rare 14-year-old, in my experience, who can leave their family, school and country for four weeks and cope well. Adolescence, especially these days, can be a traumatic enough time without such dubious 'experiences', and the school will be left to pick up the pieces.

Having taught in schools in different countries in the past, I know that educational practices and principles vary widely across the globe. Students returning from four weeks studying abroad may have some superficial views about the relative value of other ways of learning but their real education happens in their own schools. How are 14-year-olds meant to judge what they see elsewhere? A snapshot of a less challenging school environment could limit students' expectations of themselves while a visit to a school with small classes, plush surroundings and all manner of electronics may well induce resentment in young minds. For some, that resentment may eventually drive them away from their own communities where their education can do most good for others.

As for overseas students coming here to my school on an exchange visit, I would struggle to persuade teachers to adapt lessons for someone whose progress, especially in examinations, is not their responsibility. I wonder how the parents of students in my school would view the teacher time expended on students who are temporary visitors. We have no way to measure what tangible benefits our students would gain from a study exchange visit, but we might be measuring the disadvantages in poorer grades. We already have close links with several foreign schools with whom our students correspond regularly, developing their language skills and broadening their horizons.

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