UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/31**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 2010**

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

2892486218

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions: **Question 1 (Section 1)** and **one** question from **Section 2**.
Dictionaries are **not** permitted.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.
All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

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Section 1: Directed writing

1 Read the fact file below and the speech (printed on the opposite page) by a headteacher about the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia.

Imagine that you have heard the headteacher's speech at the school assembly. You decide to **write a letter to the headteacher on behalf of yourself and your fellow students, protesting against the ban and arguing why it should be lifted**.

Write the letter to the headteacher in which you should:

- give the benefits and advantages of Wikipedia
- explain why access to Wikipedia in school is necessary for your education
- argue against the points made in the speech.

Base what you write on the speech and the fact file.

Begin the letter as follows:
Dear Headteacher,
On behalf of all the students in the school, I am writing to ask you to reconsider your decision to ban Wikipedia from the school's computer network.

You should write between 1½ and 2 sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to 10 marks will be available for the content of your answer and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing. [25]

Wikipedia Fact File (Data correct October 2009).

- Wikipedia went online on 15 January 2001.
- Its creator wanted to give 'free access to the sum of all human knowledge'.
- The philosophy of Wikipedia is that the collective knowledge of millions of people is more complete and unbiased than that of one unchallenged researcher, however expert.
- It is one of the top ten most-visited sites on the internet.
- It exists in more than 260 different language versions and is still growing.
- The English language version is the largest, with more than 2,500,000 articles.
- The site is growing by 25% each year.
- In January 2009 there were more than 10 billion Wikipedia page views – 380 million per day.
- More than 280,000 people worldwide are using Wikipedia every minute.
- More than 300 million words are added to Wikipedia every month.
- In 2005, research found that Wikipedia articles were nearly as accurate as articles in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

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Headteacher's speech

Students, you are all familiar with a website called Wikipedia. You think it is a quick way of answering a question which someone has posed with instant, on tap wisdom. You see it as a useful short cut – a substitute for doing the job properly.

'Wiki' is the Hawaiian word for 'quick'. This gives away something very important: the founders of Wikipedia did not choose the Hawaiian word for 'accurate', or 'authoritative', or even 'true'. It is simply quick. Because of a commercial deal, the Wikipedia article on virtually any search word you enter will appear on the first page of links, and we all know that no one ever ventures past the first page. What you are doing is giving up your right to exercise some control over the information you receive. Why should you let the Internet control your lives? Why should you believe the contributors to Wikipedia?

For hundreds of years, accurate and reliable information has been printed in books. Publishers have always ensured that their authors had the highest qualifications in their field. The celebrated *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for example, the most respected reference work in the history of the world, insisted that all of the articles it contained were checked by at least two of the most eminent professors in that subject. You knew that you could rely on the information in the encyclopaedia: it was guaranteed.

So who writes the articles in Wikipedia? You will never know. Often they are written by people who know even less than you. Their only credential is that they have chosen to write about the subject. They may be ignorant, or scheming, or deeply prejudiced. The articles in Wikipedia are absolutely unreliable, by definition: you cannot trust them, because you do not know who wrote them, or why. And the next time you look for the same article, it might be different, because anyone can change it whenever they feel like it. Knowledge should be for all time, not here today and gone tomorrow. Any of you can write complete rubbish and post it where millions of people will see it and, if they are stupid enough, believe it. Ninety percent of students who use Wikipedia to research their assignments make no attempt to check the information somewhere more reliable. It is true that there is a small staff of over-worked volunteer editors who attempt to police what is submitted, but they are not experts either. All they can do is see whether the information is absurd or offensive. A cursory scan of random articles reveals a range of errors, from simple mistakes to one-sided interpretations masquerading as 'fact'.

One important difference, of course, is money. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was extremely expensive, because of the costs of paying all those professors for the knowledge they had acquired through a lifetime of study. Wikipedia is free. That is why students like it, and why they should not use it. Why would any expert give their hard-won knowledge away for free? Only those who have no knowledge do so, because they get satisfaction from seeing their fantasies on the web.

I have therefore banned Wikipedia in this school. It is blocked on all school computers. I cannot block it on your computers at home, but I strongly suggest that you do so yourselves. Resist the urge to take the quick and easy way out and do some real research instead – use your intelligence and judgement, compare sites and information, perhaps even visit the library and open a book. Many universities now complain that students come to them with no research skills at all, because all they have ever done is cut and paste Wikipedia articles. That's not what education is about, and I won't have it happening in my school.

[Turn over for Section 2]

Section 2: Composition

Write about 350–450 words on **one** of the following:

Argumentative/discursive writing

2 **(a)** If you could travel back in time, what invention would you prevent from being created and why? [25]

OR

(b) Is there any point in working hard to gain academic qualifications when so many people now become rich and famous without them, or buy fake ones? [25]

Descriptive writing

3 **(a)** You come across a shop in a side street which you have never noticed before. You enter, and are amazed at what you see. Describe the interior of the shop and the things on sale there. [25]

OR

(b) Describe what you see from the window during a journey by road or rail. [25]

Narrative writing

4 **(a)** A letter turns up which has been lost in the post for ten years. Write a story which explains the effect of this letter when it is finally delivered. [25]

OR

(b) 'Slow but steady wins the race.' Write a story to illustrate this saying. [25]

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