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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 2021**

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. Any blank pages are indicated.

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

Text A: Can older workers compete in a youth-obsessed business world?

Many of us dread the thought of getting older. It is human nature to want to keep ourselves looking and feeling young – just take a look around at the number of different anti-ageing products on the market. Ageing happens to all of us though, so should getting older really be considered a disadvantage? Most importantly, how will this ageing process affect our careers or livelihood?

Research suggests that age discrimination is a worldwide issue. Career experts even advise older applicants when applying for a new job not to include their birth date on their CV and to 'soften' job titles they have had so as not to appear over-qualified. If they even make it to interview, older applicants are often faced with questions such as, 'Would you be able to work for a younger manager?'

Long-time employees of a global technology company recently argued that the company had discriminated against them based on their age when it fired them as part of its plan to build an internal network of young employees. The company has eliminated more than 20 000 employees aged 40 and over in the last 6 years, referring to them in company meetings as 'grey hairs' and 'old heads' and labelling them as 'uncollaborative, technologically unsophisticated, less innovative and generally out of touch'.

Ageism – prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a person's age – is nothing new. However, it is gaining new attention because people are living and working longer.

Data suggests that there is a place for older workers in today's economy. A recent study by global recruitment specialists found multigenerational teams to be more innovative, resourceful and preferable to work in. The more age-diverse teams are, the better they perform and the better they connect with customers. Thankfully, ideas about the need for more age diversity are beginning to change attitudes regarding the role of age in the workplace.

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Text B: The dumbest generation

In 2008, Ira Wolfe, aged 58, wrote a book. He meant it as a how-to guide for getting people of different ages to work in harmony. In chapter nine, 'The Dumbest Generation', he writes about the workforce's youngest members. This article responds to Wolfe's views.

'What a difference a few decades can make,' Wolfe complains. 'A young student was once embarrassed and her parents shamed by poor grades. A young worker was remorseful if he disappointed his boss. No longer.' Wolfe whines that the basic decencies of past generations are absent in this one. He criticises a generation who 'grew up reading blogs instead of books' and 'read updates about their friends on social media instead of reading about current events in newspapers'.

Nothing new there then? The ageist argument is that we 'youngsters' know more about virtual reality than about the real world – a recycled nostalgia that each new generation is a disappointing version of the older, better one.

This story is as old as time. These grey old fogies love to scare themselves with alarming tales of a degenerate youth, but always seem to forget how the narrative turns out: the next generation is always fine. Capable. Better, even.

Look around. Everything we know – everything humans have ever relied upon, or been impressed by, or desired – was created by a generation who had been dismissed by the one before it. If we really worsened over generations, rather than improved, we'd be banging our heads against the ruins of the pyramids. Instead, we built the modern world. Our lives today are incontrovertible evidence that the ageist grumps who came before us were wrong. All of them. Every time. Without exception.

Ageism is a complex and nasty jealous monster that closes doors and makes the workplace uncomfortable, if not downright hostile, to young people.

Let me give you some examples from my own experience:

- I teach a computing class at different university campuses. Every time I walk into a new computer lab, at least one person asks something like: 'Are you supposed to be in here without your teacher?'
- I am regularly referred to as 'inexperienced', 'new', or 'just starting out'. I have been working in the industry for eight years.
- I was filling in worksheets on my tablet in a communal office space, when I was gently reprimanded by an elderly colleague for being unprofessional and failing to greet him as I was 'too busy texting or whatever on my cell phone'.

Reading this list, I can imagine a sceptic saying, that's not ageism, but I note a distinct flavour of 'You are so young. Do you really belong here?' beneath these events. Isn't it time such attitudes retired with their owners or went off for a quiet nap?

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