



EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT CHIEF DIRECTORATE

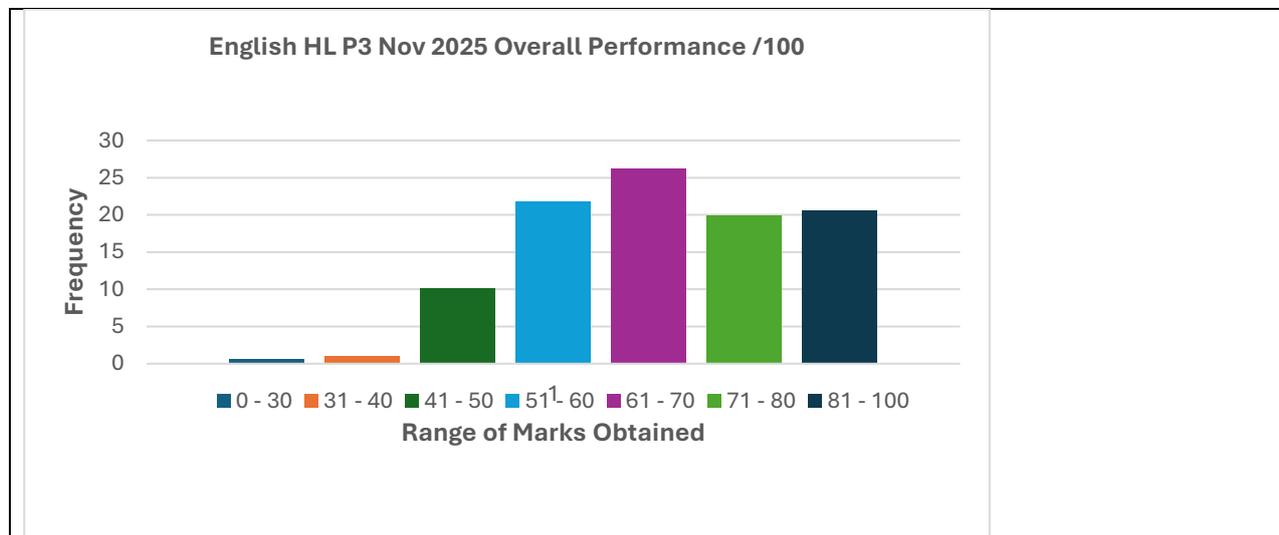
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2025 NSC CHIEF MARKER'S REPORT

SUBJECT	ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE		
QUESTION PAPER	1	2	X
DURATION OF QUESTION PAPER	3 HOURS		
PROVINCE	EASTERN CAPE		
NAME OF THE INTERNAL MODERATOR	M A KUMAH		
NAME OF THE CHIEF MARKER	R SCHELTEMA		
DATES OF MARKING	27 NOVEMBER TO 12 DECEMBER 2025		
HEAD OF EXAMINATION:	MR EM MABONA		

SECTION 1: (General overview of Learner Performance in the question paper as a whole)



Within the sample, there were very few failures. Those who did not succeed, often did not complete all the pieces or were not well prepared. As can be seen by the curve, the majority of candidates fell into the 60 – 70% range which is to be expected. A gratifying number of candidates achieved above 80%.

The paper was accessible and covered all the aspects that the candidates would have expected. There were no surprises in Section B and the essay topics in Section A catered to the

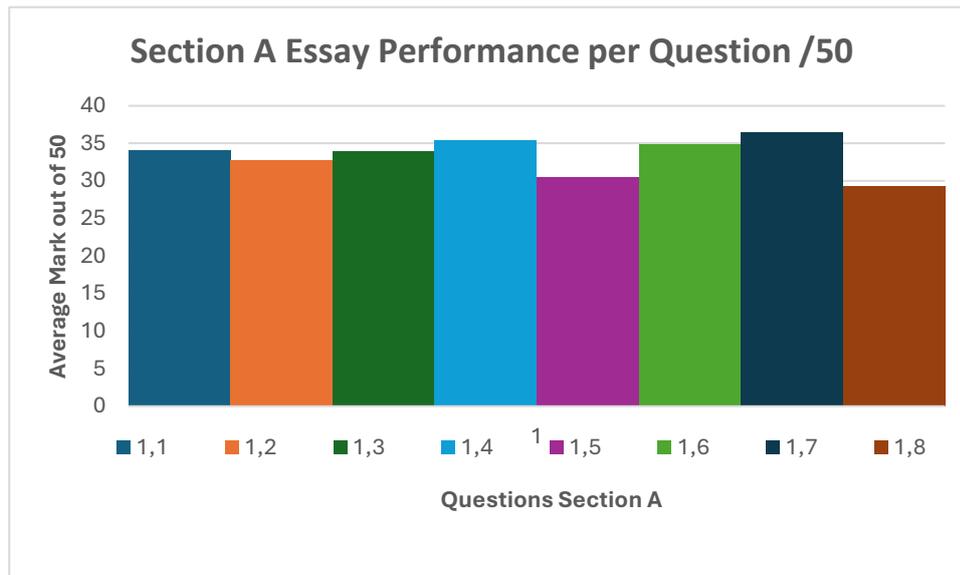
SECTION 2: Comment on candidates' performance in individual questions

(It is expected that a comment will be provided for each question on a separate sheet).

QUESTION 1

General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

SECTION A – ESSAY – 50 MARKS



The essay question was definitely better answered than the transactional questions. As can be seen by the graph, the average marks obtained in the sample were generally above 60%. This does mean that some marks were below 40%, but they were in the minority. Most candidates have become comfortable writing essays.

Topics:

1.1 A room full of mirrors

- This was a popular topic which lent itself to essays on self-reflection; one's image through others' eyes; horror narratives; looking back on the past.
- Mostly valid and mature essays were produced.
- It was often used by candidates who had pre-prepared essays, with mixed success.

1.2 In the modern world, more is never enough

- A popular choice and often written with great maturity.
- Most candidates who chose this topic managed to produce readable and relevant essays.

1.3 [Quotation] With folded arms, plain clothes and an awkward stance, he/she stood out in the room, which was dotted with pockets of smiling, confident and stylish people.

- Candidates who chose this topic managed to use the quotation well often leading to an engaging narrative.
- Not a largely popular choice.

1.4 The language of my scars

- This topic was relatively popular.
- Candidates chose to use the idea of “scars” in various ways: literal, figurative, emotional, a mixture of all these.
- Some very good essays were produced.

1.5 This humorous story is a South African reality

- Humour is difficult to explain for an average writer. Candidates should avoid topics they do not fully understand.
- This was not a particularly successful choice because of the misunderstanding of the word “humorous”.
- This was not a very popular choice.

1.6 [Visual] A person walking on stepping stones over water

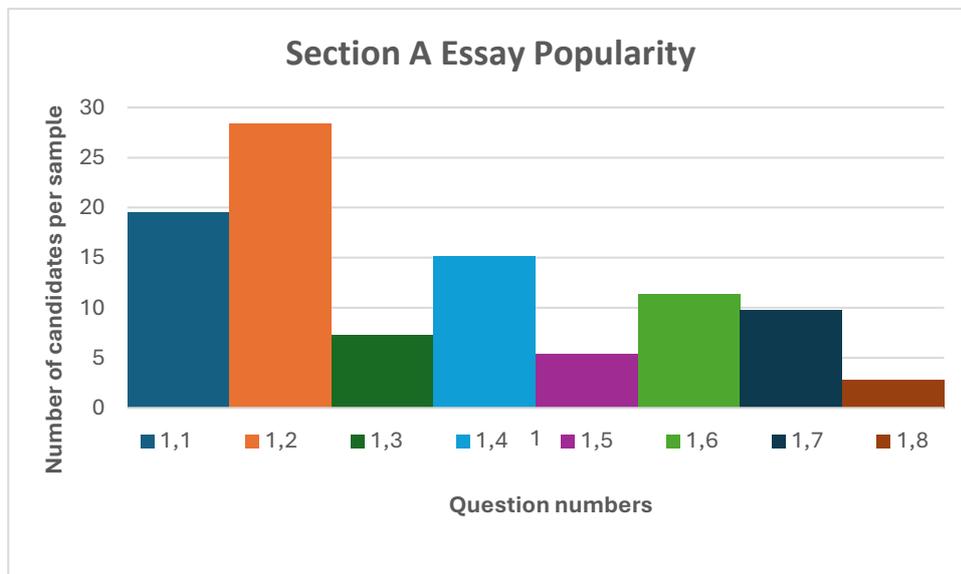
- This was a popular choice albeit it does not appear so from this sample.
- Essays ranged from life’s journeys to over-coming obstacles, to literal hikes and other narratives.
- Candidates found much relevance to their own lives when writing this essay.

1.7 [Visual] A hand flipping a coin

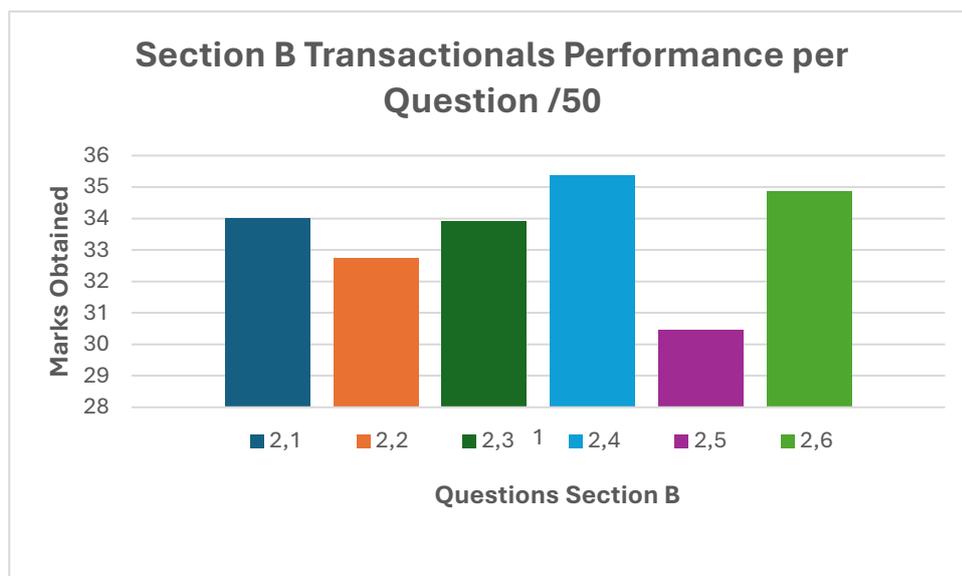
- Candidates who chose this understood the ideas of chance, fate, choices and so on.
- Excellent narratives were written ranging from action to reflective personal essays inter alia.

1.8 [Visual] A boy carving a train out of a tree stump

- Most candidates used the visual as a figurative stimulus about achieving what seems impossible.
- Some literal narratives were well-written.
- This topic was not very popular and neither did the candidates excel in this choice.



SECTION B – TRANSACTIONAL WRITING – 2 X 25 = 50 MARKS



The average marks for the transactional pieces were more varied than the essay question.

Candidates are not learning the formats and purpose of specific pieces and are losing marks accordingly.

Often these pieces have specific criteria and contexts which have to be borne in mind when writing the pieces and the candidates either did not understand them, or chose to ignore them.

This did not benefit them in any way.

Topics:

2.1 E-mail

- The writer is invited to enter a competition and pitch their invention.
- This was not a job application or an advertisement but an entry into a competition.
- Candidates who did not do well chose the incorrect genre and did not meet the criteria expectations.
- This was a popular choice and candidates managed relatively well.

2.2 Speech

- Candidates were required to deliver a speech on the theme of peace and friendship at an Africa Day rally.
- Candidates who did not do well neglected to include the themes and the context in their speech.
- Some candidates confused the idea of “relations” with “relatives”.

2.3 Magazine Article

- This article was a Survival Guide for the Modern Teenager.
- Those who did not do well did not use the format for a magazine article or had an inappropriate tone and register.
- The tone and register could have been more colloquial and light-hearted.
- It could have been ironical.

2.4 Formal Letter

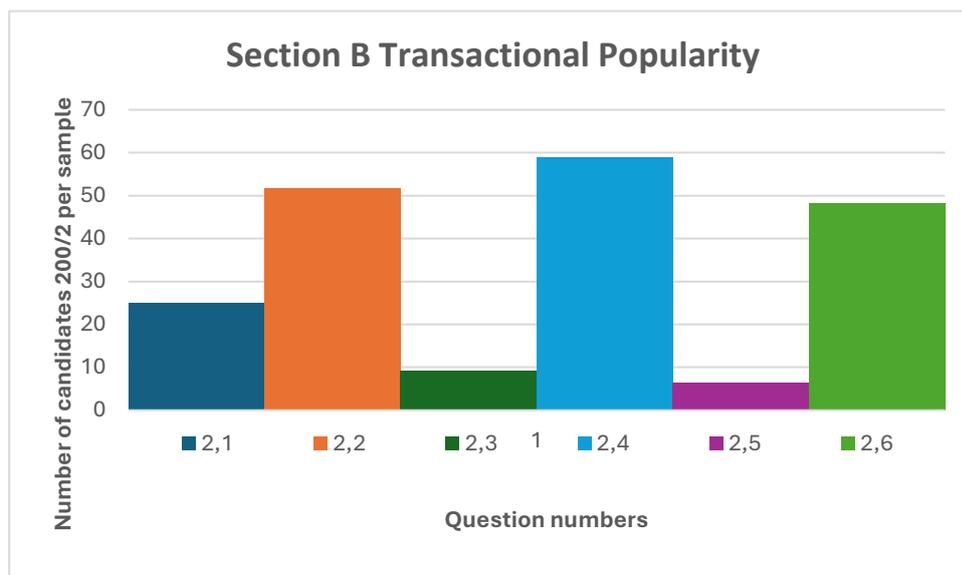
- Candidates had to write a letter to the principal of their school commenting on the favourable comments pertaining to the school which had appears on social media.
- The candidate must follow the format and register requirements of a formal letter. This was not well done.
- Candidates did not understand the idea of “favourable” comments and wrote about bad comments being made by the public.
- A candidate was allowed to acknowledge the idea of favourable comments being posted on social media but then refuting the positives.
- It was also acceptable to move off on a tangent of consequences or what it might mean for the future of the school.
- This was the most popular choice.

2.5 Book Review

- A book review was required of a book called: Letter to my future self.
- A number of candidates did not understand that this was a book review and wrote a letter to their future selves.
- A book review must have an element of critique as well as a synopsis. E.g. character development; themes; parallel universal messages and so on, and those who did not include more than a synopsis could not score much higher than moderate.
- This was not a popular choice.

2.6 Dialogue

- This was a very popular choice but candidates did not always understand that critics are people who write reviews about the restaurant – positive or negative. They saw the critic as a health inspector, for instance.
- Often the role of reviewer was seen as different from the role of a critic and this caused confusion.
- A dialogue must have interaction between two people, no more and some candidates wrote a play script which included a number of characters.
- Some dialogues were written like interviews. Possibly this arose because of the word “review” and the candidates read “interview”. An interview is not the same genre as it is more a question/answer format.



QUESTION 2

Why was the question poorly answered? Also provide specific examples, indicate common errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

Section A – Essay – Common Errors and Misconceptions

- A growing concern is the number of pre-prepared essays which candidates are learning and then trying to “push” into an essay topic. Many of these essays are AI generated.
While this practice cannot be stopped or even reviled, the candidates run the very real risk of not being on topic and being marked right down for that.
- A good essay is convincing, sincere and authentic. Candidates should follow the universal rule of writing: **WRITE ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW.**
- Rehashing film and series plots comes across as stiff and summarised. As the candidate has not lived through what they are writing about, it cannot sound convincing.
- In an effort to enrich the learners’ writing, some teachers have taught stock phrases, strong quotations and other clichés. However, the candidates use these learned phrases gratuitously ending up with an essay loaded with inapt expressions that have little to do with the topic and that make following the argument very difficult. Candidates should avoid overloading with clichés. Rather use one or two expressions to help the writing than creating an overflow.
- A good introduction grabs the attention of the reader. Candidates should strongly avoid starting with: “In this essay I will be discussing...”; “Hello I am... and I will be addressing...”;
- The visuals are a stimulus. This means that they should not be described or the essay should not begin with: “In this picture I will be...”

Section B – Transactional Writing – Problem areas identified

Formats

- Transactional writing is largely format-based. The format falls under **CONTENT** in the rubric. If a learner does not apply the appropriate format correctly, this affects the **CONTENT** mark negatively. Learners should be taught correct formats so that they can avoid losing marks unnecessarily.

Dealing with the question

- Remember that Transactional writing is **PURPOSE** writing. A candidate should be aware of the purpose they are trying to achieve and should ask themselves whether this purpose has been achieved once the piece is complete.
- Each transactional piece has certain criteria in the question which the candidate is required to include in their response.
- Candidates must ensure that the question has been fully answered.
- Transactional pieces are deliberately shorter than the essays. In real life, the audience of a transactional piece will want to get to the crux of the piece immediately. Candidates are encouraged to not ramble or “pad” the piece. Once the purpose has been achieved, the piece is finished.
- Candidates should not be misguided into thinking that they will be awarded more marks if they write longer pieces.

QUESTION 3

Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

Common problems found in the marking process

Content and Planning

- 60% of the marks allocated to writing is content based.
- Planning is encouraged so that the candidate can plan and edit the content of the writing.
- Too thin – involving much repetition of ideas and thoughts does not help the candidate.
- Too long – this involves more opportunity to make mistakes and ramble.
- Planning ensures that the essay has only what is needed but this is used to maximum effect to get the message of the essay across to the reader/marker.

General

Tenses

- The tense of the verb should be consistent. If a sentence begins in the past tense, you may not change the tense randomly to present tense. E.g. "I bumped into my friend yesterday and he says that he is going to the party." The sentence begins in past tense (bumped) but then the reported speech is in the present tense (says; is). This is incorrect.
- The correct tenses should be used when using reported speech.
- Using the present participle (-ing words) requires the use of an auxiliary verb to give it tense. This should also be consistent.

Spelling

- Basic words are misspelt.
Receive; achieve; their; The "ie" rule must be taught.
- Joining words that do not get joined – "Iwill", "Iam" instead of "I will" and "I am". This probably stems from being told not to use contractions!
- "Modern" not "mordern";
- "olden" days not "oldern" days;
- "A lot" not "alot";
- "writing" not "writting";
- he's vs his – "he's" is the contraction of he + is; "his" is the possessive adjective;
- The confusion continues between: their; they; they're; the; there;
- Were; where; we're;
- This vs these; live vs leave;
- Then vs than;
- Loose vs lose;
- Every day vs everyday;

Sentence construction

- The use of comma splices remains a huge problem. Learners must be taught that clauses cannot be joined by a comma. A semi-colon may be used and a legitimate conjunction is a good option. Using a full stop to create two simple sentences is often the best option as learners should learn to keep their sentences shorter to avoid convoluted writing. (See next bullet)
- Learners are of the mistaken idea that a long sentence shows that they have a good command of writing. The result is that many sentences lose their main thought (main clause) and become a rambling confusion of ideas that destroy the impact the learner

was hoping to achieve. Encourage shorter, more concise sentences with a definite main clause and no more than two subordinate clauses.

- Peppering long sentences with “then”, instead of using a full stop is a tedious practice.
- A good sentence will not have the same words repeated in it. For example, the words “just” (I just want to say that I just don’t like cats.); even (Do you even want to do that even today?) Use synonyms instead.
- The rule of not starting a sentence with a conjunction still stands – especially with “and” and “but”. Candidates should avoid doing this.
- The correct conjunction should be used as the meaning changes when a random conjunction is used.
- Use of “moreover” and “whereby” randomly or repeatedly is becoming more prevalent. Rather avoid “whereby” as it is seldom used correctly. Using “moreover” to start every paragraph becomes tedious and is frequently incorrect.
- Not using the pronoun before the verb – e.g. “Am getting ready to leave.” Instead of “I am getting ready to leave.”

Punctuation

- The lower-case “i” as the first-person pronoun is still being used. This is incorrect and should be taught correctly.
- The rule for capitalisation is still for proper nouns and at the beginning of a sentence. Random placing of capital letters is incorrect.
- The rules are still the same: a sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. This basic writing rule is often ignored and candidates are penalised accordingly.
- Ellipsis dots should be used sparingly and should definitely not take the place of a full stop.
- Ellipsis dots are correctly used as three dots only. Multiple dots are incorrect.
- Exclamation marks should be used in the singular. Only in cartoons may more than one exclamation mark be used at the end of a sentence.

Paragraphs

- Paragraphs are indicated by leaving a line open before the next idea.
- All writing, including the speech, should be in paragraphs.
- Each new idea should be a new paragraph.
- Paragraph should deal with one concept only.
- Once an idea has been dealt with, it should not be repeated in a different paragraph.
- The concluding paragraph should not include anything new.
- Avoid “labelling” the paragraphs – “Introduction”; or “In conclusion”; or “To conclude” – this is not how creative writing is written. More content-based subjects like History use this technique but avoid it in English essays.

Apostrophes

- Apostrophes used in contractions are still not being used correctly.
- The plural possessive remains a problem.
- Very often apostrophes are ignored completely.

Hyphens

- The rule for hyphenating a word at the end of a line is:
 - the word must be broken at the syllable (beau-ti-ful; hap-py)
 - the hyphen is at the end of the line and NOT at the beginning of the next line
- Hyphenating incorrectly is a style and punctuation error.

Vocabulary

- Slang is not good English. This examination is meant for the candidate to showcase his/her use of good English and so slang and inappropriate colloquialisms are discouraged.
- “gonna”; “wanna”; “gotten”; “cause” (instead of because) are not formal English. Learners should be strongly discouraged from using them.
- “You” is both a singular and plural pronoun. “Youse” is not a word.
- Conversate is not a word. The verb for conversation is “converse”.

Prepositions

- The correct preposition must be used in a sentence.
- The prevalence of “on” being used as a default preposition is still evident.
- “of” and “about” are confused for each other.

Articles

- The use of “an” before a vowel is still a rule and should be applied.
- The use of the article is something that is being dropped from the beginning of sentences. This is not correct. For example: The majority of learners;

Concord

- Agreement of verb – subject should be taught and monitored. This error is still a problem.
- Pronoun agreement should be observed: if the first pronoun in the sentence is “you”, then the rest of the sentence should refer to “your”, “yourself”. Likewise, if the pronoun is “one”, then the rest of the sentence should be “one’s”, “oneself”.
- For grouping like “People” the pronoun should be “their”, “them”, “themselves”. E.g. When people write exams, it is their responsibility to look after themselves and their stationery.
- For a singular group name like “a person” the pronoun should be “his/her”, “himself/herself”. Example: When a person writes exams, it is his/her responsibility to look after his/herself and his/her stationery.
- “Everyone” is followed by “his/her”.

Case

- The rule of when to use “I” vs “me”; “He” vs “him”; “She” vs “her”; “we” vs “us” must be taught. The correct case should be observed at all times.

Redundancy

- The repetition of an idea when one adjective would have sufficed is redundancy. For example: She was a small little woman. Small and little mean the same thing.
- Tautology should also be avoided. For example: We, as people. (Is this not already established that we are people?); Living in this life...we have joy in this life. (Which other life could we be living in?) This is unnecessary padding of writing which is tedious to read.

QUESTION 4

Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

- Learners who love to read produce the best essays. All learners should be encouraged to read for pleasure.
- Write numbers below 100 out in full – “three” rather than “3”; “Twelve o’clock” rather than “12h00”.
- Avoid abbreviations and tagging “etc.” on to the end of a list.
- Avoid the use of the oblique to “choose” a word. For example, “A lady/woman walked in.”
- Discourage “padding” an essay to reach the word count. Rather have a shorter, more concise essay than one full of unnecessary words which detract from the content of the essay.
- Start the final draft at the top of a new page
- Remember to rule a line through the rough work.
- Untidy and over-written handwriting is difficult to read and markers will not credit what they cannot understand.
- The salutation and valediction are as necessary in an e-mail as in a letter.
- In the e-mail, Dear Sir (or name of recipient) must be used.
- Avoid opening speeches with: “Greetings to the floor or house at large.” This is used in debates and is not appropriate for speeches unless they are parliamentary speeches.
- In a formal letter, the formal greeting is ALWAYS Dear Sir/Madam. If the name of the recipient has been given or, in this year’s question, the recipient was the principal of the school whose name the candidate/writer would know, then the candidate may say Dear Mr Jones or Ms Smith.
- In a book review a recommendation and/or a rating enhance the review but are not compulsory. A good review, however, would have them.
- Dialogue is a specific genre and should not be confused with direct speech. Therefore, there should not be a “he said” after the words of the speaker.
- Do not use quotation marks in a dialogue.