



Write your name here	
Surname	Other names
Centre Number	Candidate Number
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Edexcel IGCSE	
English as a Second Language	
Paper 1: Reading and Writing	
Friday 10 June 2011 – Afternoon Time: 2 hours	Paper Reference 4ES0/01
You must have: Insert for Part 2 and Part 3 (enclosed)	Total Marks

Instructions

- Use **black** ink or ball-point pen.
- **Fill in the boxes** at the top of this page with your name, centre number and candidate number.
- Answer **all** questions.
- Answer the questions in the spaces provided
– *there may be more space than you need.*
- Dictionaries may **not** be used in this examination.

Information

- The total mark for this paper is 100.
- The marks for **each** question are shown in brackets
– *use this as a guide as to how much time to spend on each question.*

Advice

- Read all the instructions carefully and keep to the word limit given.
- Keep an eye on the time.
- Try to answer every question.
- Check your answers if you have time at the end.

P38739A

©2011 Edexcel Limited.

1/1/1/C1



Turn over ►

edexcel 
advancing learning, changing lives

READING

Part 1

Read the pieces of advice (A–I) below and match each of the statements 1–10 to the correct piece of advice by marking a cross ☒ for the answer. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new answer with a cross ☒.

Not all pieces of advice have to be used. A piece of advice can be used more than once.

Top 10 Things You Can Do to Reduce Global Warming

- A** Do your part to reduce household waste by choosing reusable products instead of disposable ones. Buying products with minimal packaging will help to reduce waste and whenever possible, recycle paper, plastic, newspaper, glass and aluminium. If there isn't a recycling programme at your workplace, school, or in your community, ask about starting one.
- B** Adding insulation to walls and attics can lower heating expenses by reducing the amount of energy required to heat and cool your home. Turn down the heating or the air-conditioning while sleeping at night or away during the day, and keep temperatures moderate at all times.
- C** Wherever practical, replace ordinary light bulbs with fluorescent or energy-saving light bulbs. Replacing just one 60-watt light bulb with a fluorescent one, for example, will save money and will last 10 times longer, using two-thirds less energy, whilst emitting 70 percent less heat.
- D** Less driving means fewer emissions and reduces carbon footprints. Besides, walking and cycling are great forms of exercise. When you do drive, make sure the vehicle is running efficiently. For example, keeping tyres properly inflated and driving at a sensible and consistent speed can improve fuel consumption. When purchasing a new vehicle, choose one that offers high mileage per gallon.
- E** When purchasing new household appliances, such as refrigerators, washing machines or computers, look for the more energy-saving models. Integrated appliances mean fewer products therefore less electricity used. You may be surprised to know that the latest generation of computer game consoles can consume up to a massive 250W of power – the equivalent of having over four 60W traditional light bulbs burning.
- F** Set your water heater at 50 °C to save energy, and wrap it in an insulating blanket. Fit energy-saving showerheads which save hot water and reduce energy consumption. Wash your clothes in warm or cold water to reduce the use of hot water and the energy required to produce it. Do not leave water running unnecessarily.
- G** Save electricity and reduce global warming by turning off lights when you leave a room. Remember to turn off the stereo and computer when you are not using them. Leaving the television on standby wastes electricity so, when you have finished watching, turn it off.
- H** If you have the means, plant a tree. During photosynthesis, trees and other plants absorb carbon dioxide and give off oxygen but, at present, there are too few of them to counter the increases in carbon dioxide caused by humans.
- I** Seek advice from your local gas or electricity supplier. Many utility companies provide free energy audits to help consumers identify areas in their homes that may not be energy-efficient. In addition, these companies offer rebate schemes to help pay for the cost of energy-efficient upgrades.



Questions 1-10

1 Switch your PC off when you don't need it.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2 Do the laundry at a lower temperature.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3 Ask about how to make your house more energy-efficient.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4 Purchase items sold in cardboard boxes, for example, that you can recycle.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5 Insulate your home and get money back from energy providers.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6 Select a digital television which combines a television with a digital receiver.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7 Don't keep your house too hot or too cold.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8 Buy electrical goods for the kitchen that are energy-efficient.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9 Consider alternative methods of transport.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10 Look for more economical ways of lighting the house.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(Total for Part 1 = 10 marks)



Part 2

Read the article below on taking a gap year and answer questions 11–25.

How to fund a gap year

A gap year is simply a year, or even less, taken out of formal education. For example, this may occur during the transition from secondary school to sixth form or college, before starting a university course, or before beginning a postgraduate programme. It could even be taken after completing all formal education but before entering the world of work. Regardless of when it occurs, there are many options that include travel, work or volunteering.

Every year around one million people in the UK say they would be interested in taking a gap year, but only a fraction end up taking one. A large proportion give up because they think they cannot cover the costs but experts say the cost of a gap year need not stop anyone. "One of the most frustrating things is hearing people say they can't afford a gap year, when I see thousands of people every year doing it," said Tony Williams, founder of a company that specialises in organising gap years.

A "year out" usually costs between £3,000 and £4,000 depending on whether you travel, volunteer or work or do any of these in combination. This can be a menacing amount for students who may already be snowed under with loans, or school leavers without much vocational experience. However, it is rare for people to finish their year out with greater debt than when they started. Choosing a gap year which includes work as well as travel gives you the added luxury of not having to cover all your costs before you go – you can top up your funds by working during the year.

Lynn Black, an English Literature student at the University of Exeter, spent six months working on a community project in Thailand. "I worked in England for a few months and saved enough money to buy a ticket to go there, with about £500 spare," she explained. "As a volunteer you get board and lodging and a meagre wage, but you don't need much to live quite comfortably."

There are countless examples of students using their initiative to think up ideas to raise the necessary funds to go on a gap year. They range from the physically challenging, like swimming the distance of the English Channel or running a half marathon, to the ridiculous, like the girl who sat in a bath of cat food for an hour and managed to raise £1,200.

But the gains of fundraising for a gap year extend beyond the short-term advantages. "It looks amazing on your CV, and it's a brilliant thing to do," Williams said. "If you go for an interview and it comes down to two people, the fundraiser will stand out."

Raising money in small amounts can seem demoralising, but it does build up. For example, a car washing business which cleans ten cars a week at £3 a time makes £120 a month, over £1,500 in a year. "The secret is not to try and get full funding from large multi-national companies, but to get £100 here, £100 there, and build it up slowly," Williams explained. "You need only ten friends to sponsor you £10 for shaving your head and you have £100."

Mike Henry, a journalism student at Bournemouth University, spent some of his gap year in Belize, after raising over £4,000. He worked full-time in a department store for three and a half months and also used his initiative to organise some events. "I tried to think of some original things to do. I know someone who owns a restaurant, so I asked him whether he could help me do a cheese-tasting night. We did it and he let me keep the £600 profits," Henry said.



Gap years can cost as much or as little as you want. The opportunities to raise the money you will need are there, so do not take out a loan for your travels. Student money worries are big enough without adding further debts into the mix. A gap year is feasible for all students – all you need is the determination to raise the money.

Questions 11–15

Read the statements below. Decide whether they are TRUE, FALSE or NOT GIVEN according to the text.

Mark a cross ☒ for the correct answers. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new answer with a cross ☒.

	True	False	Not Given
11 Students usually take a gap year between university and full-time employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 People with job experience are more likely to take a gap year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 You are not paid if you work as a volunteer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 It is a good idea to fund your gap year from a variety of sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Borrowing money to fund a gap year is not recommended.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



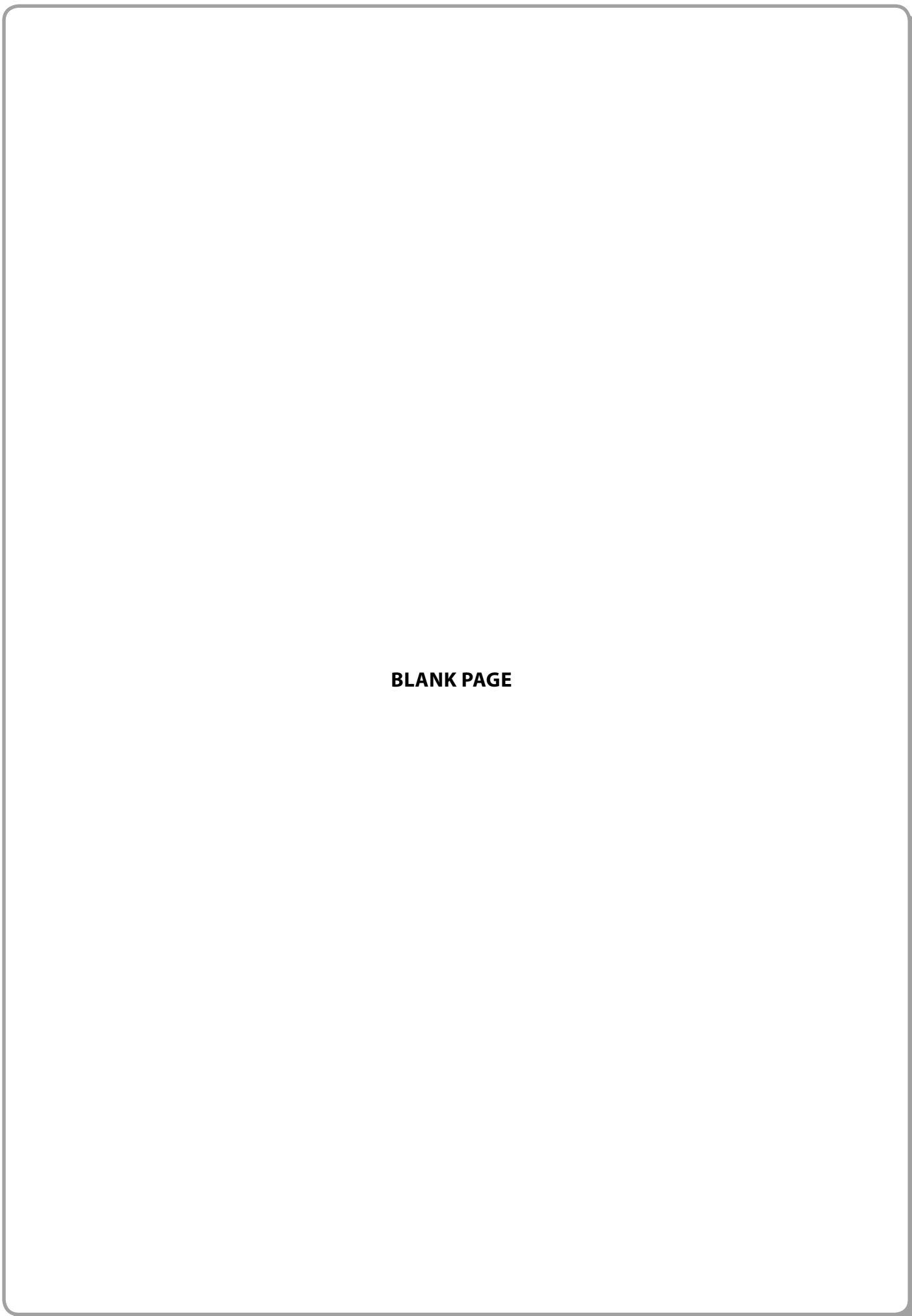
Questions 16–25

Complete the following sentences. Write no more than TWO words and/or numbers taken from the text.

- 16 Tony Williams thinks that it is that so many people decide against a gap year.
- 17 A is another expression for a gap year.
- 18 A gap year may be a of several activities.
- 19 Lynn Black raised money for her gap year by working in beforehand.
- 20 Although some students raise money in crazy ways, others do more activities.
- 21 There may be for fundraisers long after they have raised money for their gap years.
- 22 Mike Henry was employed in a before going on his gap year.
- 23 Mike Henry arranged a number of to fund his gap year.
- 24 Students usually have enough without the added stress of getting into debt.
- 25 The article advises students to show when finding ways to fund a gap year.

(Total for Part 2 = 15 marks)





BLANK PAGE



P 3 8 7 3 9 A 0 7 2 0



Part 3

Read the article below on the Olympic Games and answer questions 26–40.

The Olympic Games

Next year the 2012 Summer Olympic Games will be held in London from 27 July to 12 August. It will be the third time that they have been held in the capital, London having been host previously in 1908 and 1948. It will be the thirtieth Olympiad going back to the first Games of the modern era in 1896. However, the history of the Olympic Games goes back thousands of years to ancient times.

The Olympic Games took their name from the Greek city of Olympia and, though there were important athletic competitions held in other Greek cities in ancient times, the Olympic Games were regarded as the most prestigious. The Games were held every four years during August and September and the word "Olympiad", which referred to the four-year intervals between competitions, was commonly used to measure time. The first documented Olympic champion was a man named Coroebus, a cook from Elis, who won the sprint race in 776 BC. Historians believe that the Games had already existed for at least five hundred years prior to that date, although there is no written historical evidence.

The Olympic Games originally featured only one event: a race called the "stade", equal to a distance of about two hundred metres. By 728 BC two more races had been added, comparable to the four hundred metre and fifteen hundred metre races of the modern Games. Later the Olympics were to include wrestling, boxing and the pentathlon, as well as specialised events for soldiers and messengers. It was only in 472 BC that the events were spread out over a period of four to five days, as previously they had all taken place on a single day.

Participation in the Olympic Games was originally limited to free-born Greeks, but as the Greek Empire grew as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Games attracted entrants from Antioch and Alexandria, in the Middle East. While the only official prize was a wreath or garland, successful athletes were supported in their training by the governments of their cities. Most of the competitors were, in fact, professionals. After the Roman conquest of Greece in the second century BC, the Olympic Games suffered a decline in popularity and importance, but the Games persisted until AD 393, when the Roman Emperor Theodosius I ordered their abolition.

The idea of reviving the Olympic Games originated with French aristocrat Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who first raised the issue in 1892. At a conference on international sport held in Paris in 1894, Coubertin managed to convince delegates, representing nine countries, to vote in favour of an Olympic revival. The organisers had planned the first modern Olympics for 1900 in Paris, but later decided to move the date forward to 1896 and to change the venue to Athens, the original site of the Games. The first Olympic Games of the modern era were inaugurated by the King of Greece in the first week of April 1896.

The idea of putting five interlocking rings (blue, yellow, black, green and red) on a white background was conceived by Pierre de Coubertin. This Olympic symbol represents the meeting of the union of five continents and athletes of the world at the Olympic Games.



The Games of 1896, 1900 and 1904 were loosely organised and did not feature national teams produced by rigorous selection. The 1908 Games, held in London in a newly-built sixty-six thousand seater stadium, were the first where the events were organised by the relevant authorities in each athletic discipline. More than two thousand athletes from twenty-two nations competed in one hundred events. No Games were held in 1916 due to World War I, but the Games enjoyed renewed growth after the war. At the 1928 Games in Amsterdam there were more than two hundred women among the three thousand athletes, more than double the number that took part in 1924. The Olympic Games were suspended again for twelve years because of World War II, resuming in 1948 in London.

The post-war era saw gradual growth in the number of countries and athletes competing with a dramatic increase in the number of women's events. New sports were introduced and professional sportsmen and women were allowed to compete. Popularity for the Games spread through all five continents and competition to hold the Games became intense, with countries from each corner of the globe vying to be the next Olympic host.

Controversy has plagued the Olympic movement since the early 1970s with countries boycotting a number of Games for political reasons. However, over the last two decades, normality has returned and the organisers of the 2012 London Olympics are looking forward to a successful and memorable Olympic Games.

Questions 26–40

Complete the following sentences writing no more than THREE words and/or a number taken from the text.

- 26** The word "Olympic" is derived from a in Greece.
- 27** According to historians, the first winner of the Olympic Games was also
a
- 28** Later on, only could compete in certain events.
- 29** The winners received a
- 30** was the original date for the first modern Olympics.
- 31** In April 1896, the King of Greece launched the first Games of
the
- 32** The five circles symbolise five continents.
- 33** In London, a was constructed for the 1908 Games.
- 34** From 1924 to 1928, the number of taking part in
the Games had more than doubled.
- 35** After World War II increased for the Olympic
Games.



P 3 8 7 3 9 A 0 9 2 0

Indicate your answers to the questions below by marking the box . If you change your mind about an answer, put a line through the box and indicate your new answer with a cross .

36 The Games were held for the first time in London in...

- A 1896.
- B 1908.
- C 1948.

37 The first Olympic event was over approximately...

- A 200 metres.
- B 400 metres.
- C 1,500 metres.

38 The Games became popular outside Greece due to...

- A Coroebus of Elis.
- B Alexander the Great.
- C Emperor Theodosius.

39 The original Olympic Games came to an end as a result of...

- A the conquests of Alexander the Great.
- B the Roman occupation of Greece.
- C World War I.

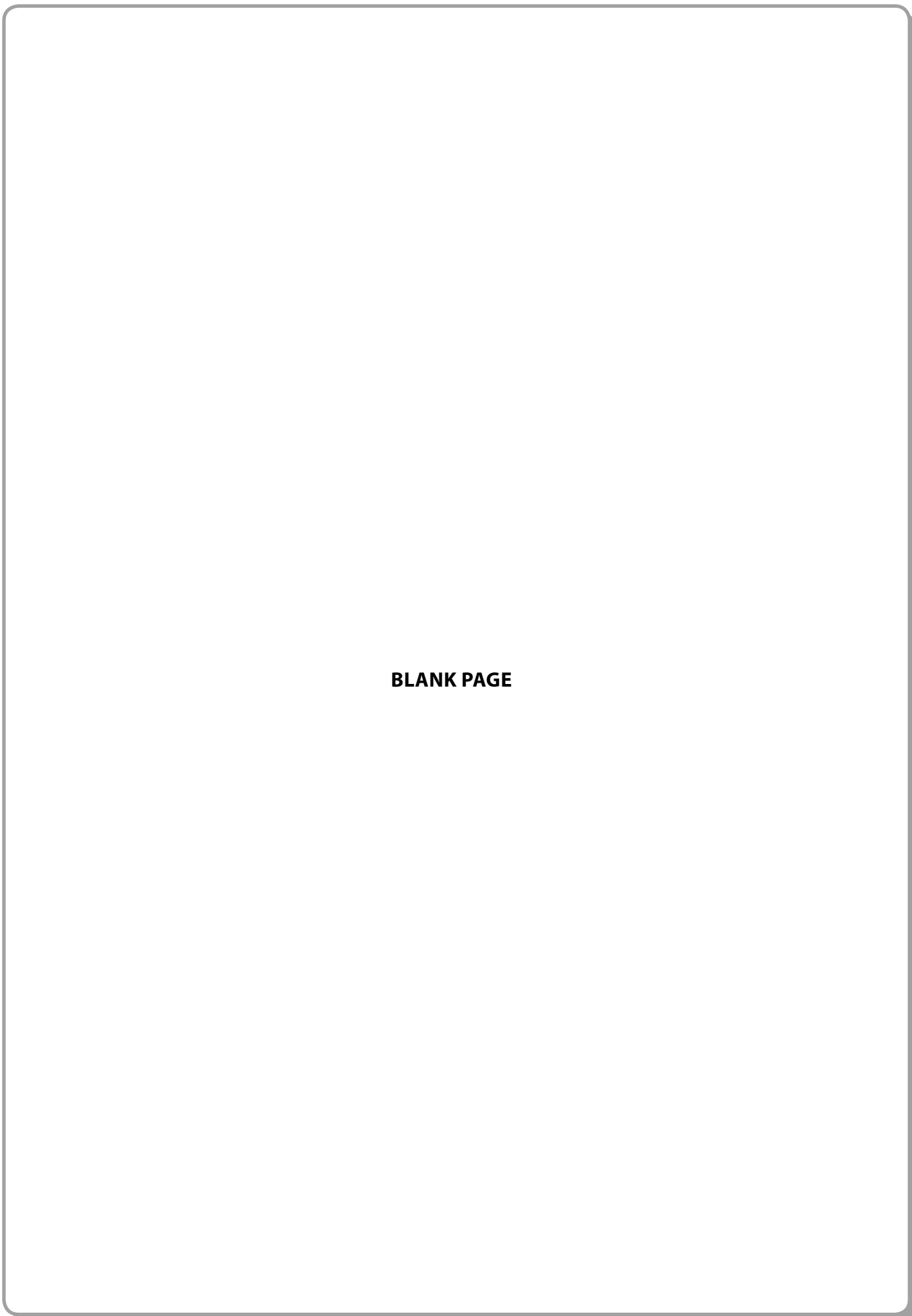
40 The Olympic movement has experienced difficulties in recent times due to...

- A intense competition.
- B increasing costs.
- C international politics.

(Total for Part 3 = 15 marks)

TOTAL FOR READING = 40 MARKS





BLANK PAGE





Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

(Total for Part 4 = 20 marks)



P 3 8 7 3 9 A 0 1 3 2 0





Blank writing area with horizontal lines.

(Total for Part 5 = 20 marks)



P 3 8 7 3 9 A 0 1 5 2 0



Part 6

In class you are doing a project on ice cream. Read the text below and write a summary for your teacher.

Your summary should include:

- The differences between ice cream and sorbet
- Ice cream before the twentieth century
- The origins of sorbet

Ice cream

Ice cream is a frozen dessert usually made from dairy products, such as milk and cream, and often combined with fruits or other ingredients and flavours. Most varieties contain sugar, although some are made with other sweeteners. The mixture is stirred slowly while cooling to prevent large ice crystals from forming; the result is a smoothly textured ice cream. The meaning of the term ice cream varies from one country to another. Terms like sorbet and gelato and others are used to distinguish between different varieties and styles.

In the past ice cream was the favourite dessert of the Caliphs of Baghdad. Arabs were the first to use milk as a major ingredient in its production, and sweetened the ice cream with sugar rather than fruit juices. As early as the 10th century, ice cream was widespread in many of the Arab world's major cities such as Baghdad. Their version of ice cream was produced from milk or cream and often some yoghurt, similar to Ancient Greek recipes, and was often flavoured with rosewater and dried fruits.

Sorbet is a frozen dessert made from sweetened water flavoured with fruit, wine or liqueur. It can be served as a sweet or it is sometimes served between courses as a way to cleanse the palate before the main course. It can also be served as a non-fat or low-fat alternative to ice cream.

In the 16th century, the Mughal emperors used relays of horsemen to bring ice from the Hindu Kush to Delhi, where it was used in fruit sorbets. One hundred years later, Charles I of England was supposedly so impressed by the "frozen snow" that he offered his own ice cream maker a lifetime pension in return for keeping the formula secret.

There are various accounts of where sorbet came from: a Middle Eastern drink *charbet*, made of sweetened fruit juice and water, or a Roman creation. Folklore holds that Nero, the Roman Emperor, invented sorbet during the first century A.D. when he had runners along the Appian Way pass buckets of snow hand over hand from the mountains to his banquet hall, where it was then mixed with honey and wine. Yet another account says that Marco Polo brought a recipe for a sorbet-like dessert back to Italy from China in the late 13th century. These frozen desserts are believed to have been brought to France in 1533 by Catherine de Medici when she left Italy to marry the Duke of Orleans, who later became Henry II of France. By the end of the 17th century, sorbet was served in the streets of Paris, and its popularity spread to England and the rest of Europe.

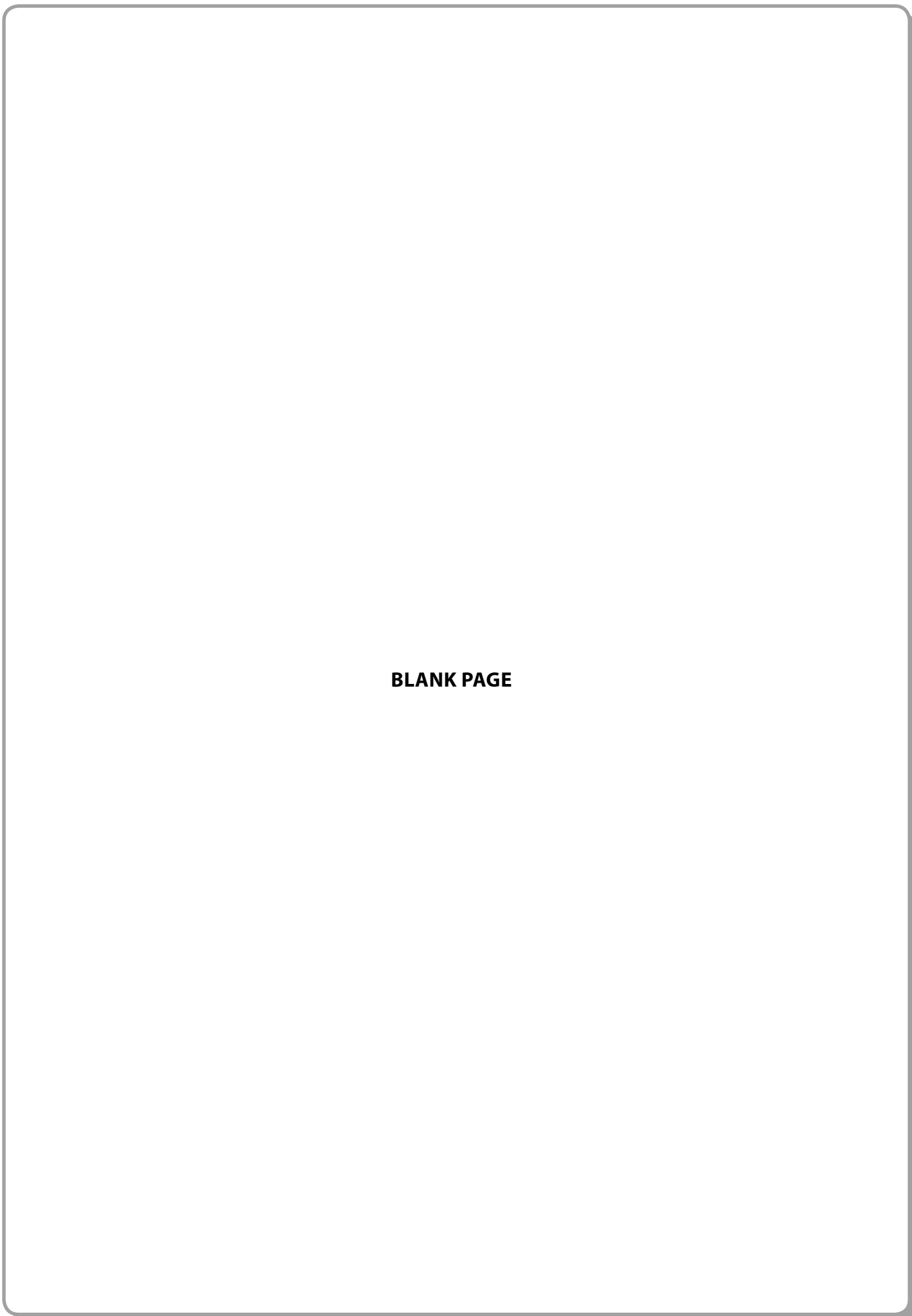
In the United Kingdom today 14 million adults buy ice cream as a treat, in a market worth over a billion pounds. But not only in Britain is ice cream so popular; it is a favourite world-wide and today global sales are valued at US \$60 billion.



You must write between **100 and 150 words**.

Handwriting practice area with 25 horizontal dotted lines.



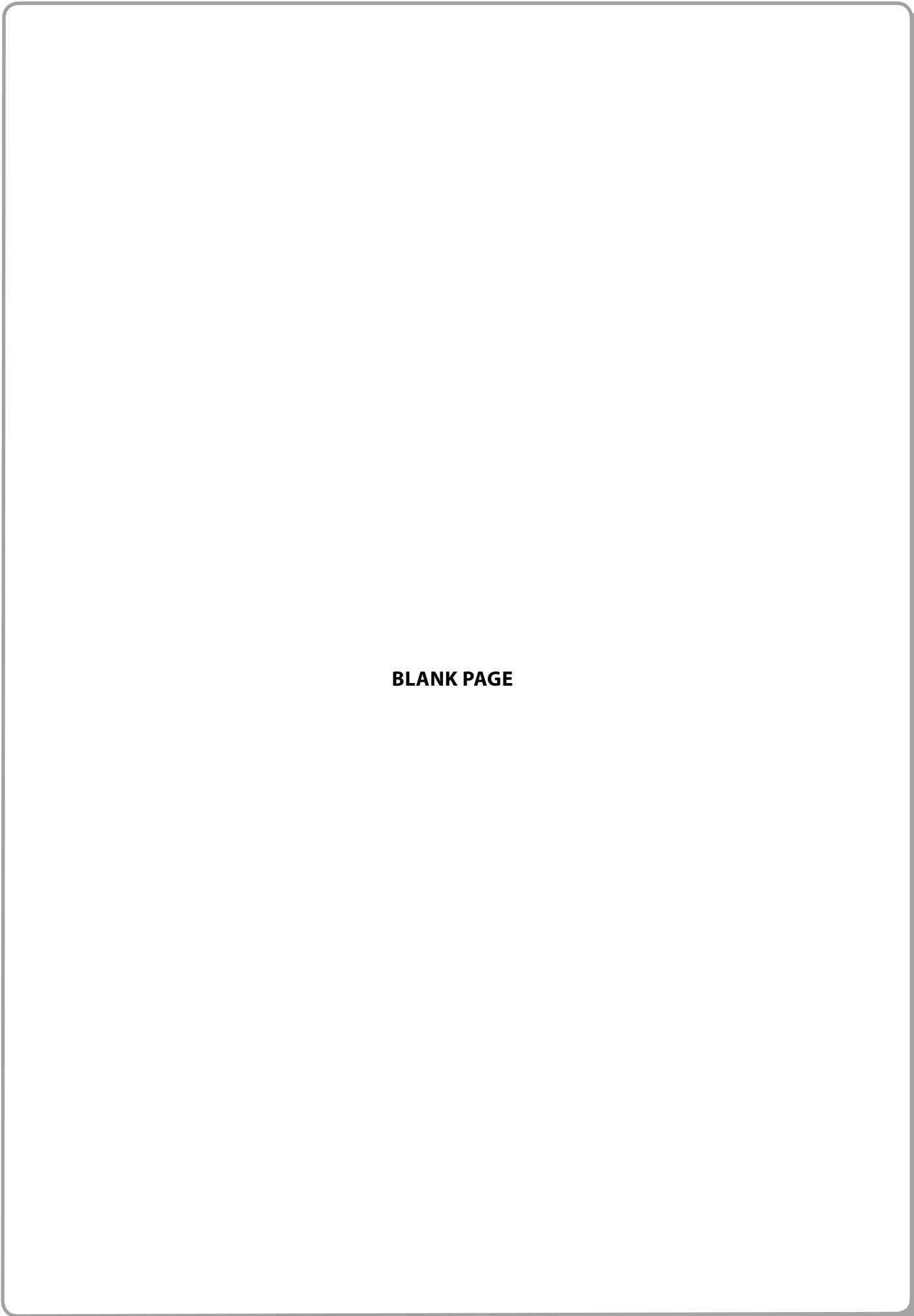


BLANK PAGE



P 3 8 7 3 9 A 0 1 9 2 0





BLANK PAGE



Edexcel IGCSE

English as a Second Language
Paper 1: Reading and Writing

Friday 10 June 2011 – Afternoon
Insert for Part 2 and Part 3

Paper Reference
4ES0/01

Do not return the insert with the question paper.

Turn over ►

P38739A

©2011 Edexcel Limited.

1/1/1



edexcel 
advancing learning, changing lives

Part 2

How to fund a gap year

A gap year is simply a year, or even less, taken out of formal education. For example, this may occur during the transition from secondary school to sixth form or college, before starting a university course, or before beginning a postgraduate programme. It could even be taken after completing all formal education but before entering the world of work. Regardless of when it occurs, there are many options that include travel, work or volunteering.

Every year around one million people in the UK say they would be interested in taking a gap year, but only a fraction end up taking one. A large proportion give up because they think they cannot cover the costs but experts say the cost of a gap year need not stop anyone. "One of the most frustrating things is hearing people say they can't afford a gap year, when I see thousands of people every year doing it," said Tony Williams, founder of a company that specialises in organising gap years.

A "year out" usually costs between £3,000 and £4,000 depending on whether you travel, volunteer or work or do any of these in combination. This can be a menacing amount for students who may already be snowed under with loans, or school leavers without much vocational experience. However, it is rare for people to finish their year out with greater debt than when they started. Choosing a gap year which includes work as well as travel gives you the added luxury of not having to cover all your costs before you go – you can top up your funds by working during the year.

Lynn Black, an English Literature student at the University of Exeter, spent six months working on a community project in Thailand. "I worked in England for a few months and saved enough money to buy a ticket to go there, with about £500 spare," she explained. "As a volunteer you get board and lodging and a meagre wage, but you don't need much to live quite comfortably."

There are countless examples of students using their initiative to think up ideas to raise the necessary funds to go on a gap year. They range from the physically challenging, like swimming the distance of the English Channel or running a half marathon, to the ridiculous, like the girl who sat in a bath of cat food for an hour and managed to raise £1,200.

But the gains of fundraising for a gap year extend beyond the short-term advantages. "It looks amazing on your CV, and it's a brilliant thing to do," Williams said. "If you go for an interview and it comes down to two people, the fundraiser will stand out."

Raising money in small amounts can seem demoralising, but it does build up. For example, a car washing business which cleans ten cars a week at £3 a time makes £120 a month, over £1,500 in a year. "The secret is not to try and get full funding from large multi-national companies, but to get £100 here, £100 there, and build it up slowly," Williams explained. "You need only ten friends to sponsor you £10 for shaving your head and you have £100."

Mike Henry, a journalism student at Bournemouth University, spent some of his gap year in Belize, after raising over £4,000. He worked full-time in a department store for three and a half months and also used his initiative to organise some events. "I tried to think of some original things to do. I know someone who owns a restaurant, so I asked him whether he could help me do a cheese-tasting night. We did it and he let me keep the £600 profits," Henry said.

Gap years can cost as much or as little as you want. The opportunities to raise the money you will need are there, so do not take out a loan for your travels. Student money worries are big enough without adding further debts into the mix. A gap year is feasible for all students – all you need is the determination to raise the money.

Part 3

The Olympic Games

Next year the 2012 Summer Olympic Games will be held in London from 27 July to 12 August. It will be the third time that they have been held in the capital, London having been host previously in 1908 and 1948. It will be the thirtieth Olympiad going back to the first Games of the modern era in 1896. However, the history of the Olympic Games goes back thousands of years to ancient times.

The Olympic Games took their name from the Greek city of Olympia and, though there were important athletic competitions held in other Greek cities in ancient times, the Olympic Games were regarded as the most prestigious. The Games were held every four years during August and September and the word "Olympiad", which referred to the four-year intervals between competitions, was commonly used to measure time. The first documented Olympic champion was a man named Coroebus, a cook from Elis, who won the sprint race in 776 BC. Historians believe that the Games had already existed for at least five hundred years prior to that date, although there is no written historical evidence.

The Olympic Games originally featured only one event: a race called the "stade", equal to a distance of about two hundred metres. By 728 BC two more races had been added, comparable to the four hundred metre and fifteen hundred metre races of the modern Games. Later the Olympics were to include wrestling, boxing and the pentathlon, as well as specialised events for soldiers and messengers. It was only in 472 BC that the events were spread out over a period of four to five days, as previously they had all taken place on a single day.

Participation in the Olympic Games was originally limited to free-born Greeks, but as the Greek Empire grew as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Games attracted entrants from Antioch and Alexandria, in the Middle East. While the only official prize was a wreath or garland, successful athletes were supported in their training by the governments of their cities. Most of the competitors were, in fact, professionals. After the Roman conquest of Greece in the second century BC, the Olympic Games suffered a decline in popularity and importance, but the Games persisted until AD 393, when the Roman Emperor Theodosius I ordered their abolition.

The idea of reviving the Olympic Games originated with French aristocrat Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who first raised the issue in 1892. At a conference on international sport held in Paris in 1894, Coubertin managed to convince delegates, representing nine countries, to vote in favour of an Olympic revival. The organisers had planned the first modern Olympics for 1900 in Paris, but later decided to move the date forward to 1896 and to change the venue to Athens, the original site of the Games. The first Olympic Games of the modern era were inaugurated by the King of Greece in the first week of April 1896.

The idea of putting five interlocking rings (blue, yellow, black, green and red) on a white background was conceived by Pierre de Coubertin. This Olympic symbol represents the meeting of the union of five continents and athletes of the world at the Olympic Games.

The Games of 1896, 1900 and 1904 were loosely organised and did not feature national teams produced by rigorous selection. The 1908 Games, held in London in a newly-built sixty-six thousand seater stadium, were the first where the events were organised by the relevant authorities in each athletic discipline. More than two thousand athletes from twenty-two nations competed in one hundred events. No Games were held in 1916 due to World War I, but the Games enjoyed renewed growth after the war. At the 1928 Games in Amsterdam there were more than two hundred women among the three thousand athletes, more than double the

number that took part in 1924. The Olympic Games were suspended again for twelve years because of World War II, resuming in 1948 in London.

The post-war era saw gradual growth in the number of countries and athletes competing with a dramatic increase in the number of women's events. New sports were introduced and professional sportsmen and women were allowed to compete. Popularity for the Games spread through all five continents and competition to hold the Games became intense, with countries from each corner of the globe vying to be the next Olympic host.

Controversy has plagued the Olympic movement since the early 1970s with countries boycotting a number of Games for political reasons. However, over the last two decades, normality has returned and the organisers of the 2012 London Olympics are looking forward to a successful and memorable Olympic Games.