

ZIAUDDIN UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION BOARD

HSSC-A

AS LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1: Reading, Writing & Language Use	B2 Level
Duration:	3 hours
Total Marks:	75

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Answer ALL questions in the spaces provided.
- Write your answers in blue or black ink.
- Follow the time allocations for each section.
- Read all questions carefully before answering.
- Write clearly and legibly.

TIME ALLOCATION

Section	Time	Marks
Section A: Reading	50 minutes	19
Section B: Vocabulary	35 minutes	11
Section C: Grammar	35 minutes	11
Section D: Writing	60 minutes	34

SECTION A: READING

Time: 50 minutes | Marks: 19

TEXT 1

The Digital Divide: Bridging the Gap in Modern Education

In an era where technology permeates nearly every aspect of modern life, access to digital resources has become a fundamental determinant of educational success. The digital divide—the gap between those who have ready access to computers and the internet and those who do not—represents one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary education systems worldwide. This disparity extends far beyond mere physical access to devices; it encompasses digital literacy, quality of connectivity, and the socioeconomic factors that perpetuate educational inequality.

Research conducted by the International Telecommunications Union reveals that approximately 2.9 billion people, representing 37% of the global population, remain offline. The implications for education are profound. Students without reliable internet access struggle to complete assignments, participate in online learning platforms, or develop the digital competencies increasingly demanded by employers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these disparities became starkly visible as schools transitioned to remote learning, effectively excluding millions of students from educational opportunities.

The consequences of the digital divide manifest across multiple dimensions. Academically, students lacking digital access demonstrate lower achievement levels, reduced engagement with coursework, and diminished opportunities for advanced learning. Socially, they experience isolation from peers who communicate and collaborate through digital platforms. Economically, the cycle perpetuates itself as limited digital skills restrict future employment prospects, making it difficult for families to break free from poverty.

However, addressing the digital divide requires more than simply distributing devices and expanding infrastructure. Effective solutions must acknowledge the complex interplay of factors contributing to digital exclusion. Digital literacy programs must accompany technology provision, ensuring that students and educators possess the skills necessary to leverage digital tools effectively. Schools must provide ongoing technical support and training, recognizing that technology constantly evolves.

Several innovative initiatives demonstrate promising approaches to bridging the digital divide. Community-based programs offering free WiFi in public spaces, libraries equipped with modern computer facilities, and mobile learning centers bringing technology to remote areas represent grassroots solutions addressing local needs. Government policies mandating affordable internet access and subsidizing device purchases for low-income families provide systemic support. Educational institutions developing low-bandwidth learning materials and offline-capable applications ensure that limited connectivity does not become an insurmountable barrier.

The path forward requires collaborative efforts from governments, educational institutions, technology companies, and communities. Investment in digital infrastructure must prioritize underserved areas. Curriculum development must integrate digital literacy as a fundamental competency. Most importantly, solutions must recognize that technology serves as a means to educational equity rather than an end in itself. By addressing the digital divide comprehensively, societies can ensure that all students possess the tools necessary to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Questions 1-5: Multiple Choice (5 marks)

Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D) for each question. (1 mark each)

1. According to the text, the digital divide primarily refers to:

- A) The generation gap in technology use
- B) Differences in computer programming skills
- C) The gap between those with and without digital access
- D) Variations in internet speed across regions

2. What percentage of the global population remains offline according to the International Telecommunications Union?

- A) 29%
- B) 37%
- C) 42%
- D) 50%

3. The text suggests that during COVID-19, the digital divide:

- A) Was completely eliminated
- B) Became more visible and problematic
- C) Had minimal impact on education
- D) Only affected university students

4. According to the author, effective solutions to the digital divide must:

- A) Focus solely on providing devices
- B) Address only infrastructure issues
- C) Include digital literacy training
- D) Wait for natural economic growth

5. The main purpose of this text is to:

- A) Criticize government technology policies
- B) Promote specific technology companies
- C) Explain the digital divide and discuss solutions
- D) Argue against online education

Questions 6-7: Short Answer (4 marks)

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

6. Identify TWO consequences of the digital divide mentioned in the text. (2 marks)

7. What does the author mean by stating that "technology serves as a means to educational equity rather than an end in itself"? (2 marks)

TEXT 2

The Psychology of Procrastination: Understanding and Overcoming Delay

Procrastination afflicts individuals across all demographics, from students postponing assignments to professionals delaying critical projects. Despite widespread recognition of its detrimental effects, this behaviour persists as one of the most common obstacles to productivity and personal achievement. Understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying procrastination provides essential insights for developing effective strategies to combat this pervasive phenomenon.

Contrary to popular belief, procrastination does not stem primarily from laziness or poor time management. Research in behavioural psychology suggests that procrastination represents an emotional regulation problem rather than a time management issue. When confronted with tasks perceived as difficult, boring, or anxiety-inducing, individuals instinctively seek immediate mood repair through avoidance. This short-term emotional relief reinforces procrastination behaviour, creating a cycle that becomes increasingly difficult to break.

Dr. Timothy Pychyl, a leading researcher in procrastination studies, identifies several psychological factors contributing to task avoidance. Perfectionism paradoxically fuels procrastination, as individuals fear their work will not meet impossibly high standards. This fear of failure transforms into fear of starting, with postponement serving as protection against potential inadequacy. Similarly, individuals with low self-confidence doubt their ability to complete tasks successfully, leading to avoidance as a self-protection mechanism.

The immediate consequences of procrastination extend beyond delayed deadlines. Chronic procrastinators experience elevated stress levels, diminished work quality, and compromised well-being. Studies demonstrate correlations between habitual procrastination and various health issues, including cardiovascular problems, depression, and anxiety disorders. The mental burden of uncompleted tasks—what psychologists term the Zeigarnik effect—creates persistent cognitive tension that undermines overall life satisfaction.

Effective strategies for overcoming procrastination address its emotional roots rather than merely imposing external structure. The "five-minute rule" suggests committing to work for just five minutes, recognizing that initiating action often dissolves resistance. Breaking large projects into manageable components reduces overwhelming feelings and provides clear starting points. Self-compassion, contrary to self-criticism, proves more effective in motivating behavioural change, as harsh self-judgment intensifies the negative emotions that triggered procrastination initially.

Environmental modifications also support behavioural change. Removing distractions, establishing designated work spaces, and using technology blockers create conditions conducive to focused work. Implementation intentions—specific plans detailing when, where, and how tasks will be completed—significantly increase follow-through rates. Most importantly, recognizing procrastination as a psychological challenge requiring compassionate self-understanding rather than harsh self-judgment represents the first step toward meaningful change.

Questions 8-10: Multiple Choice (3 marks)

Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D) for each question. (1 mark each)

8. According to the text, procrastination is primarily caused by:

- A) Poor time management skills
- B) Laziness and lack of motivation

- C) Emotional regulation problems
- D) External distractions and interruptions

9. The text suggests that perfectionism contributes to procrastination because:

- A) Perfectionists work too slowly
- B) High standards lead to fear of starting
- C) Perfect work takes too much time
- D) Perfectionists lack organizational skills

10. According to the text, which approach is most effective for overcoming procrastination?

- A) Harsh self-criticism
- B) Ignoring deadlines completely
- C) Self-compassion and understanding
- D) Working without breaks

Question 11: Summary Writing (7 marks)

Write a summary of Text 2 (The Psychology of Procrastination) in 150-200 words. Your summary should include the main causes of procrastination and the key strategies recommended to overcome it.

SECTION B: VOCABULARY

Time: 35 minutes | Marks: 11

Question 1: Contextual Vocabulary (5 marks)

For each word in bold, choose the word or phrase closest in meaning to how it is used in the sentence. (1 mark each)

1. The company implemented a **comprehensive** training programme for all employees.
A) expensive B) complete C) brief D) mandatory

2. Her **meticulous** approach to research earned her widespread recognition.
A) careless B) innovative C) careful D) rapid

3. The government's decision to **allocate** more funds to education was welcomed by educators.
A) reduce B) distribute C) request D) withhold

4. The research findings were **compelling** enough to change public opinion on the issue.
A) confusing B) persuasive C) contradictory D) irrelevant

5. The author's **nuanced** portrayal of the character revealed deep understanding of human psychology.
A) simple B) subtle C) dramatic D) negative

Question 2: Word Formation (3 marks)

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits grammatically and meaningfully in the sentence. (1 mark each)

1. The scientist's _____ approach to problem-solving led to several breakthroughs. (INNOVATE)

2. Despite facing _____ challenges, she remained determined to achieve her goals. (NUMBER)

3. The committee expressed their _____ with the proposed changes to the curriculum. (SATISFY)

Question 3: Collocations (3 marks)

Complete each sentence with the appropriate collocation from the box. Use each option only once. (1 mark each)

make progress pay attention take into account

1. Students must _____ to the teacher's instructions if they want to succeed.

2. When making decisions, we should _____ the perspectives of all stakeholders.

3. With consistent effort and dedication, you will eventually _____ toward your objectives.

SECTION C: GRAMMAR

Time: 35 minutes | Marks: 11

Question 1: Error Identification and Correction (5 marks)

Identify the error in each sentence and write the correction. If there is no error, write "Correct". (1 mark each)

1. The committee have made their decision regarding the new policy.

Error: _____ Correction: _____

2. If I would have known about the meeting, I would have attended.

Error: _____ Correction: _____

3. Despite of the heavy rain, the match continued as scheduled.

Error: _____ Correction: _____

4. The research shows that regular exercise can improve both physical and mental health.

Error: _____ Correction: _____

5. Each of the students were given a certificate of participation.

Error: _____ Correction: _____

Question 2: Sentence Transformation (3 marks)

Rewrite each sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the original. Use the word given in brackets and do not change this word. (1 mark each)

1. "I will submit the assignment tomorrow," said Maria. (promised)

2. The university requires all students to attend orientation. (compulsory)

3. Sarah regrets not studying harder for the examination. (wishes)

Question 3: Gap-Filling (3 marks)

Complete the following passage by filling in each blank with ONE appropriate word. (1 mark each)

The advent of social media has fundamentally transformed (1) _____ way people communicate. While these platforms offer opportunities for connection, they have also raised concerns about mental health. Research suggests (2) _____ excessive social media use can lead to feelings of inadequacy. Users should (3) _____ aware of how much time they spend online and the impact it has on their well-being.

SECTION D: WRITING

Time: 60 minutes | Marks: 34

Task 1: Extended Essay (22 marks)

Write an essay of 400-500 words on ONE of the following topics:

Topic A: "Technology has improved our lives more than it has harmed them." To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Support your argument with specific examples and reasoning.

Topic B: Environmental conservation is often seen as the responsibility of governments and large corporations. Discuss the role that individuals can play in protecting the environment and whether their actions can make a significant difference.

Topic C: Describe a place that holds special significance in your life. Explain why this place is meaningful to you and how it has influenced your personal development.

Your essay should:

- Have a clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion
- Present well-developed ideas with supporting evidence
- Use appropriate vocabulary and varied sentence structures
- Demonstrate accurate grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Be written in an appropriate academic or descriptive style

Task 2: Formal Communication (12 marks)

Write a formal communication of 250-300 words on ONE of the following:

Option A: Formal Letter

You recently attended a youth leadership conference organized by a local NGO. Write a letter to the organizers expressing your appreciation for the event and suggesting improvements for future conferences.

Option B: Article

Your school magazine is publishing a special edition on student success stories. Write an article titled "The Importance of Perseverance in Academic Achievement" for the magazine.

Option C: Formal Email

You wish to apply for a summer internship at a technology company. Write a formal email to the Human Resources Department introducing yourself, explaining your interest in the position, and highlighting your relevant skills and experience.

Your communication should:

- Follow appropriate format conventions (letter heading, email subject line, etc.)
- Use formal register and appropriate tone
- Be well-organized with clear paragraphs
- Demonstrate accurate language use
- Be appropriate for the intended audience and purpose

END OF PAPER

ZIAUDDIN UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION BOARD

HSSC-A

AS LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1: Reading, Writing & Language Use

ANSWER KEY AND MARKING SCHEME

[FOR EXAMINER USE ONLY]

Total Marks: 75

SECTION A: READING (19 MARKS)

TEXT 1: The Digital Divide

Questions 1-5: Multiple Choice (5 marks)

1. **C** - The gap between those with and without digital access

Justification: The text explicitly states: "The digital divide—the gap between those who have ready access to computers and the internet and those who do not"

2. **B** - 37%

Justification: The text states: "approximately 2.9 billion people, representing 37% of the global population, remain offline"

3. **B** - Became more visible and problematic

Justification: The text mentions: "During the COVID-19 pandemic, these disparities became starkly visible as schools transitioned to remote learning"

4. **C** - Include digital literacy training

Justification: The text states: "Digital literacy programs must accompany technology provision, ensuring that students and educators possess the skills necessary"

5. **C** - Explain the digital divide and discuss solutions

Justification: The text presents the problem of the digital divide and then discusses various solutions and approaches

Questions 6-7: Short Answer (4 marks)

Question 6 (2 marks): Identify TWO consequences of the digital divide mentioned in the text.

Model Answer:

Students lacking digital access demonstrate lower achievement levels and reduced engagement with coursework (Academic consequence). They also experience social isolation from peers who communicate through digital platforms (Social consequence).

Acceptable answers (any TWO):

- Lower academic achievement levels
- Reduced engagement with coursework
- Diminished opportunities for advanced learning
- Social isolation from peers
- Limited digital skills restricting employment prospects
- Perpetuation of poverty cycle

Marking: 1 mark for each correct consequence identified (maximum 2 marks)

Question 7 (2 marks): What does the author mean by stating that "technology serves as a means to educational equity rather than an end in itself"?

Model Answer:

The author means that technology is a tool to achieve equal educational opportunities for all students, not the ultimate goal. The focus should be on educational equity, with technology being used as an instrument to reach that objective rather than being the primary aim itself.

Key points for marking:

- Technology is a tool/instrument (1 mark)
- The goal is educational equity/fairness/equal opportunity (1 mark)

TEXT 2: The Psychology of Procrastination

Questions 8-10: Multiple Choice (3 marks)

8. C - Emotional regulation problems

Justification: The text states: "procrastination represents an emotional regulation problem rather than a time management issue"

9. B - High standards lead to fear of starting

Justification: The text mentions: "This fear of failure transforms into fear of starting"

10. C - Self-compassion and understanding

Justification: The text states: "Self-compassion, contrary to self-criticism, proves more effective in motivating behavioural change"

Question 11: Summary Writing (7 marks)

Model Answer (175 words):

Procrastination is primarily caused by emotional regulation problems rather than poor time management. When individuals encounter tasks they perceive as difficult or anxiety-inducing, they seek immediate emotional relief through avoidance. Psychological factors contributing to procrastination include perfectionism, where people fear their work will not meet high standards, and low self-confidence, which causes doubt about completing tasks successfully.

The consequences of chronic procrastination include elevated stress levels, diminished work quality, and various health issues such as cardiovascular problems and anxiety disorders. Effective strategies for overcoming procrastination address its emotional roots. The "five-minute rule" suggests starting with brief work periods to dissolve resistance. Breaking large projects into smaller components reduces overwhelming feelings. Self-compassion proves more effective than self-criticism for motivating change. Environmental modifications, such as removing distractions and creating designated work spaces, support behavioural improvement. Implementation intentions—specific plans detailing when, where, and how to complete tasks—significantly increase success rates. Understanding procrastination as a psychological challenge requiring compassion represents the crucial first step toward meaningful change.

Marking Criteria:

Criteria	Marks
Content: Includes main causes (emotional regulation, perfectionism, low confidence) and key strategies	3 marks
Organization: Clear, logical structure	2 marks
Language: Accurate grammar, appropriate vocabulary	2 marks

SECTION B: VOCABULARY (11 MARKS)

Question 1: Contextual Vocabulary (5 marks)

1. **B** - complete
2. **C** - careful
3. **B** - distribute
4. **B** - persuasive
5. **B** - subtle

Question 2: Word Formation (3 marks)

1. **innovative** (adjective form of INNOVATE)
2. **numerous** (adjective form of NUMBER)
3. **dissatisfaction / satisfaction** (noun form of SATISFY - accept either positive or negative form depending on context)

Question 3: Collocations (3 marks)

1. **pay attention**
2. **take into account**
3. **make progress**

SECTION C: GRAMMAR (11 MARKS)

Question 1: Error Identification and Correction (5 marks)

1. The committee have made their decision regarding the new policy.

Error: have **Correction:** has

Explanation: "Committee" is a collective noun treated as singular in this context

2. If I would have known about the meeting, I would have attended.

Error: would have known **Correction:** had known

Explanation: Third conditional uses "had + past participle" in the if-clause, not "would have"

3. Despite of the heavy rain, the match continued as scheduled.

Error: Despite of **Correction:** Despite / In spite of

Explanation: "Despite" is not followed by "of"; use "despite" or "in spite of"

4. The research shows that regular exercise can improve both physical and mental health.

Error: Correct **Correction:** N/A

Explanation: No grammatical error in this sentence

5. Each of the students were given a certificate of participation.

Error: were **Correction:** was

Explanation: "Each" is singular, so it requires "was" not "were"

Question 2: Sentence Transformation (3 marks)

1. Maria promised to submit the assignment the next day.

Alternative: Maria promised that she would submit the assignment the next day.

2. It is compulsory for all students to attend orientation.

Alternative: Attendance at orientation is compulsory for all students.

3. Sarah wishes she had studied harder for the examination.

Alternative: Sarah wishes (that) she had studied harder for the examination.

Question 3: Gap-Filling (3 marks)

1. **the** (definite article)

2. **suggests / shows / indicates** (reporting verb)

3. **be** (modal verb construction)

SECTION D: WRITING (34 MARKS)

Task 1: Extended Essay (22 marks)

Sample Essay - Topic A: Technology

Technology: A Force for Progress

Technology has become an integral part of modern life, fundamentally transforming how we communicate, work, learn, and interact with the world around us. While concerns about technology's negative impacts are valid and deserve attention, the overwhelming evidence suggests that technological advancement has improved our lives far more than it has harmed them. This improvement manifests across healthcare, education, communication, and economic opportunity.

The healthcare sector provides perhaps the most compelling evidence of technology's positive impact. Medical imaging technologies such as MRI and CT scans enable early disease detection, dramatically improving survival rates for conditions like cancer and heart disease. Telemedicine has expanded healthcare access to remote and underserved communities, allowing patients to consult specialists regardless of geographical barriers. Surgical robots assist in performing delicate procedures with unprecedented precision, reducing recovery times and complications. The rapid development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, facilitated by advanced biotechnology and global communication networks, saved millions of lives and demonstrated technology's capacity to address global challenges.

Education represents another domain where technology has created transformative improvements. Digital learning platforms have democratized access to knowledge, allowing individuals worldwide to pursue education regardless of their economic circumstances or location. Online courses from prestigious universities are now available to anyone with internet access. Educational apps and interactive software cater to diverse learning styles, helping students who might struggle in traditional classroom environments. During the pandemic, technology enabled educational continuity when physical schools closed, preventing complete disruption of learning for millions of students globally.

Communication technology has fundamentally altered human connection, largely for the better. Video calling platforms enable families separated by distance to maintain close relationships. Social media, despite its well-documented problems, has facilitated social movements, raised awareness about important issues, and connected individuals with shared interests across the globe. Instant messaging and collaboration tools have made remote work viable, offering professionals flexibility and work-life balance previously unimaginable.

However, acknowledging technology's benefits does not require ignoring its harms. Social media can contribute to mental health issues, particularly among young people. Screen addiction affects productivity and well-being. Privacy concerns and data security risks present real challenges. Yet these problems represent failures in implementation and regulation rather than inherent flaws in technology itself. The solution lies in developing digital literacy, establishing appropriate regulations, and using technology mindfully rather than rejecting technological progress.

The economic opportunities technology has created further demonstrate its positive impact. The digital economy has generated entirely new industries and career paths. Entrepreneurs in developing nations can now reach global markets through e-commerce platforms. Freelancing platforms connect skilled workers with opportunities worldwide, transcending traditional employment barriers.

In conclusion, while technology presents genuine challenges that require thoughtful attention and response, its overall impact on human welfare has been profoundly positive. The improvements in healthcare, education, communication, and economic opportunity have enhanced quality of life for billions of people. Rather than viewing technology with suspicion or fear, we should embrace its potential while working to mitigate its risks through education, regulation, and conscious use. The question is not whether technology improves our lives, but how we can ensure its benefits are distributed equitably and its harms are minimized.

[Word count: 498]

Essay Marking Criteria (22 marks)

Criteria	Marks
Content & Ideas: Relevant, well-developed arguments with specific examples	6 marks
Organization: Clear structure with introduction, body, conclusion; logical progression	5 marks
Language: Appropriate vocabulary, varied sentence structures	6 marks
Accuracy: Grammar, spelling, punctuation	5 marks

Task 2: Formal Communication (12 marks)

Sample - Option C: Formal Email (Internship Application)

Subject: Application for Summer Internship Position

Dear Human Resources Team,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the summer internship position at your esteemed technology company. As a second-year Computer Science student at Ziauddin University with a demonstrated passion for software development and innovation, I believe I would be a valuable addition to your team.

Throughout my academic career, I have maintained a strong focus on both theoretical knowledge and practical application. I have completed coursework in programming languages including Python, Java, and JavaScript, and have experience with web development frameworks such as React and Node.js. My recent project involved developing a mobile application for student resource management, which enhanced my skills in user interface design and database management.

Beyond technical competencies, I possess strong analytical and problem-solving abilities, demonstrated through my participation in university coding competitions where I achieved recognition. I am particularly drawn to your company's commitment to innovative solutions and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to your projects while developing my professional skills under the guidance of experienced mentors.

I have attached my resume for your review and would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss my application further in an interview. Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

[Student Name]

[Word count: 265]

Formal Communication Marking Criteria (12 marks)

Criteria	Marks
Format & Register: Appropriate formal structure and tone	3 marks
Content: Addresses task requirements fully and appropriately	4 marks
Organization: Clear paragraphs with logical flow	2 marks
Language Accuracy: Grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation	3 marks

END OF ANSWER KEY