

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

Year 9 2026

Academic Scholarship Exams – Teacher Commentary

General Paper

Section A

Candidates engaged well with the text in Section A. Their responses provided insight into the political, personal and social roles that languages play, as well as into the question of whether the world would be a more peaceful place if everyone spoke the same language.

For the first three questions, the highest scoring candidates explained ideas from the article rather than simply quoting it.

For Questions 4 and 5, the strongest responses justified why students' points were true and significant by referring to specific reasons and considering wider consequences.

Section B

Section B responses were impressive this year. All candidates showed a nuanced understanding of their chosen question, and most considered it from a range of perspectives. The highest scoring candidates explained how their chosen examples and evidence supported their argument, rather than merely describing real-life situations. Some candidates, however, lost marks for not clearly linking their points back to the question throughout.

Humanities Paper – Geography

Section A

Candidates largely answered Question 1 well, although some misunderstood the question, ignoring the word 'settlement'. Weaker candidates failed to give any explanation for the settlement distribution.

Question 2 was more challenging, with fewer candidates scoring full marks. Among those who did, their answers were outstanding: these candidates followed all the question instructions, referring to the map, naming cities and their scores, and then describing and explaining in a sophisticated manner why certain cities scored highly. Stronger answers considered factors such as population density, transport type, fossil

fuel production and the ability or inability to use renewable energy sources. Key terms such as HIC and LIC enhanced answers.

Section B

Very few candidates attempted Question 2. Only a couple of candidates produced a plan as requested. Most candidates aimed to have an introduction, main body and conclusion as instructed. Stronger answers in both questions engaged well with the command term 'To what extent do you agree...?'.

Question 1 was executed much better than Question 2, and most candidates attempted to discuss the positive as well as negative impacts of Global Climate Change. As expected, candidates described and explained far more negative than positive impacts, with stronger candidates developing their answer beyond the expected increased temperatures, rises in sea level, increased climate hazard events, economic impacts and migration, to discussions about the impacts not only on individual species but on food chains and biodiversity generally at a range of latitudinal locations, as well as the different degrees of impact on HICs and LICs. Encouragingly, this year only one candidate attributed tectonic hazards to global climate change!

Question 2 was a more difficult question, and answers were less effective. One candidate failed to understand the term 'tariff' despite the explanation on the exam paper. The strongest answer recognised the significance of tariffs to the growth of certain sectors of a national economy but, overall, the much greater benefits of cooperation by participation in international trade.

Humanities Paper – History

The paper was divided into two sections: an unseen visual source and a choice of structured essay-style questions. The majority of students gave insightful responses to the visual source. However, many needed to explain and support their inference with a direct reference to the source content. The responses to the essays displayed a clear understanding of historical periods, people and places from social, political, military and economic perspectives.

In the best essays, students used precise evidence from their lessons to support their views and avoided limiting their analysis by listing a range of facts from general historical knowledge. This year many used examples from present day politics which, while interesting, did not answer the question or show a historical hinterland. In the essays that achieved top marks, the clarity and coherence of the argument was aided by a formal style with clear punctuation including the capitalisation of names and

paragraphs that began with a specific opening point and closed with evaluation linked to the question. Careful planning by all candidates would have helped ensure consistently sophisticated analysis throughout the essay. Nevertheless, the majority of candidates were able to effectively deploy their knowledge to argue to a reasoned conclusion. It was a pleasure to see student enthusiasm and historical insight.

Science Paper

Biology

The first section, on the effect of humans feeding garden birds, was designed to encourage students to suggest reasons for changes in population. It focused on ideas such as competition and adaptation. No real prior knowledge was needed, as we were assessing students' ability to make suggestions and form hypotheses.

The second question concerned reproductive strategies in birds. Again, this was not based on knowledge students would already have, but instead required them to use data and numerical information to identify the benefits of both strategies.

The final question explored differences in the digestive systems of carnivores and herbivores, asking students to use the information provided to decide which system would be longer or shorter. Most students were able to link this to animals they were familiar with, identifying whether they were herbivores or carnivores. Many predicted that the human intestine would fall somewhere in between, due to an omnivorous diet.

Chemistry

In Question A, surprisingly, many students were unable to pick a property that wouldn't be exhibited by a metal from a short list.

In Question B, students generally did well to read and apply a description of how electrons are arranged in atoms. Most correctly drew a diagram of the electrons in a magnesium atom.

In Question C, students were able to determine the number of subatomic particles in an atom with varying success, despite being given clear instructions on how to do so. It is possible many did not read the instruction to use the periodic table provided, which contained a key.

In Question D, many students failed to answer one of the questions that involved filling in a box in a table, despite the instructions being in bold text. Student graph drawing skills were generally weak. Most did not draw a bar chart for a set of discrete data and drew a line of best fit for discontinuous data. Line graphs should be avoided in Chemistry with choice limited to bar chart (discrete) or x-y scatter graph (continuous). Most choices for the y-axis scale made plotting the data awkward. Students would have benefitted from a better grounding in how to select appropriate intervals for ease of plotting. Several students did not use a ruler for their axes or bars/lines. Plotting of data lacked precision and was frequently a full minor interval out from the correct value.

In Question E, almost all students were able to identify the product of a simple two element reaction.

In Question F, many students were unable to use observations to predict the products of a reaction. Many did not recognise the use of an indicator to show the presence of an alkali. Many students thought that oxygen was flammable. The final part of the question was designed to challenge students and provide evidence for scholarship. Only one student provided an answer that was consistent with the information provided. Many students wrote verbose answers that had little scientific backing. Some students did not attempt either or both parts of Question F, presumably because they ran out of time.

Physics

Students did very well with the calculations in Question 1 but failed to spot that part (a) (ii) was simply a repeated number from part (a) (i). The labelling of the Sankey diagram was generally good.

The advantages of parallel circuits were well understood, but what happened to current in parallel was much less well interpreted. The current calculations were strong, however, and showed a good grasp of the logic.

Languages Paper

Section A: Linguistics

Students found this section of the paper challenging, but it was pleasing to see some good thinking in action. To improve in linguistics challenges of this type, students should consider the sound of words and not just the letter patterns.

Section B: Modern Foreign Languages

The new format has shown a positive change. Students were able to showcase their language ability in the language they have been learning at school, predominantly in French and Spanish, with one Mandarin entry this year. Students have shown that they can use straightforward language accurately overall, as well as expressing opinions. The top scores were allocated to students who were able to showcase a higher level of grammar and structures.

Section C: Latin

The students who opted for the Latin translation performed very well, with the storyline mostly conveyed well. Students gained highest marks when they made sure not to leave out any words and made sensible guesses with any unknown vocabulary. There was some very good and accurate translation of cases and tenses. The best translations dealt with grammatical items such as the present participle and indirect statement effectively. A better knowledge of adverbs and conjunctions would have served some students very well.