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Trial Examination 2021

# VCE English Units 1&2

Written Examination

**Suggested Solutions**

## ARGUMENT AND PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

*The following is an example of a mid-range response that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.*

The debate over what students are taught at school is a perennial issue in the media. Crestview Banks Primary School is no exception to this given they offer a range of electives for their students. In response to a proposed new Introduction to Robotics and Computer Programming elective, principal Hallie Hilbert wrote a piece in the school newsletter to parents and guardians. She contends in an excited tone that parents and guardians should embrace this new initiative and encourage their children to choose the elective. Hilbert uses a variety of persuasive language techniques to convey this contention, such as inclusive language, exclamation marks, statistics and a call to action. The piece also includes a visual that supports Hilbert's argument by showing students taking part in learning via robotics and computer programming.

Hilbert begins by congratulating parents and guardians on 'making it through another school term' to align herself with the audience as part of the school community. Her enthusiastic tone when stating 'I am also thrilled to announce a NEW SUBJECT' is infectious and effective. There is also an appeal to authority as she mentions 'Monash University's Physics Department'. By joking that some parents and guardians might be 'an old dinosaur like [her]', Hilbert reveals that she is not afraid to make fun of herself. She also makes parents and guardians feel more comfortable if they do not understand robotics and computers because if Hilbert can get excited about it, so can they. The emphatic language 'spectacular learning opportunity' and inclusive language 'our children' makes the subject seem more appealing to readers. Hilbert boasts about the 'eco-friendly sports facility' and 'new garden' to show that Crestview Banks has a track record of embracing innovation. She praises 'our Grade 2s' for doing a 'tremendous job growing fruits and veggies' to demonstrate school pride and encourage readers to share in these positive emotions.

Hilbert transitions to a more logical tone by declaring that 'in the 21st century, we all know that it's not enough for our kids to just learn the classroom basics'. She promises that '[students will] still need to learn those times tables' to reassure readers, and uses inclusive language in stating 'society has changed since our generation was at school'. By stating that this subject might prepare students 'for jobs that don't exist yet', Hilbert appeals to parents and guardians wanting the best for their children, thereby strengthening her contention. She then explains what computer programming involves so that the audience is not confused and includes a list of the skills that students will learn. The list ends with '... and so much more!', which suggests that there are countless benefits to the subject, and students will have an advantage if they study it.

The photograph included in the newsletter depicts two students learning about robotics and computer programming. The students seem around primary school age, meaning they are more relatable for the audience. They also do not seem to be following direct instructions from a teacher, thereby showing that the subject encourages independence, which most parents and guardians would want for their children. The robot in the photograph looks quite complicated, which may confuse the audience, but the fact that the students seem to know what they are doing makes them look intelligent and confident, which are also traits that most parents and guardians want for their children.

Hilbert emphatically states 'this really is one of the most holistic learning experiences available, and I cannot recommend it highly enough' to make the subject appear even more valuable. She then lists three different types of students: 'a tech-savvy computer whiz, a budding astronaut or someone who just finds it hard to sit still in the classroom'. This proves that the subject will be appealing for a wide range of students, including those who find it 'hard to sit still' and may not find regular classroom subjects effective. Hilbert acknowledges that 'some parents and guardians may be concerned' about the subject being new but tells them to 'have no fear!', with the exclamation mark conveying how sure she is.

Hilbert then states that 'some parents and guardians have expressed worries' but attempts to reduce those concerns by saying 'rest assured, our position in the top 5% of the state for literacy and top 10% for numeracy is secure'. The use of statistics provides irrefutable evidence that Crestview Banks is a school with a good reputation and presumably will run this new subject properly, so the audience does not need to worry. She also states that it is 'well and truly time to embrace new initiatives', creating a sense of urgency and using a call to action.

The expression ‘let our little ones spread their wings’ is a metaphor for birds learning to fly, and hints to parents and guardians that they should let their children enrol in this subject so that they can learn new and vital skills. Hilbert then concludes in an informative tone by telling the audience that ‘expressions of interest’ begin next week, but switches to an urgent tone when she says ‘don’t miss out on this chance’. This persuades the audience by giving them the necessary information and then instructing them on what they need to do to help their children. She also mentions the ‘National Robotics Tournament’ in Sydney as a prestigious opportunity that would make the school community proud.

She encourages readers to ‘reach out to the school office’ to make the school and its staff seem approachable and available to readers if they still have questions. She then excitedly states ‘I look forward to seeing your child’s robotic creations!’ with an exclamation mark to express her enthusiasm. The formal signature sign-off gives Hilbert authority, so readers are more inclined to trust her opinions presented in this piece.

In conclusion, Hallie Hilbert uses a wide array of persuasive language techniques to communicate her argument that the new robotics and computer programming class is a valuable opportunity.

### **ASSESSOR’S COMMENTARY**

This response contains some strong analysis but is at times too generic, particularly in describing how and why the language in the material contributes to an argument. The lengthy introduction (that partly rehashes statements from the background information) is unnecessary as time could be better spent conducting a deeper analysis of the material. Furthermore, going through the piece chronologically is a viable approach, but here it limits the response from grouping similar techniques or sub-arguments together, leading to some repetition and a lack of flow. Lengthy quoting from the material also makes precise analysis more difficult. However, even though the language is fairly simplistic, this response nevertheless expresses a strong comprehension of the material and the argument presented.

*The following is an example of a high-level response that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.*

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In her newsletter piece to Crestview Banks parents and guardians, principal Hallie Hilbert enthusiastically contends that the school's new Introduction to Robotics and Computer Programming elective is an exciting opportunity for students. She writes to both current and prospective parents and guardians, allaying fears that this new focus will compromise the school's academic excellence and arguing that it is a unique way to enhance students' learning. She also includes a photo depicting two students building a robot to demonstrate the challenging but rewarding aspects of the new subject.

Hilbert positions herself as a figure of authority with students' best interests at heart. She adopts a formal but friendly tone throughout the piece and refers to the school as a 'community'. For readers whose children are already enrolled at Crestview Banks, this is intended to make them feel included and even engenders a sense of school pride. Whereas, for prospective parents and guardians who may view the newsletter online, this may compel them to view Crestview Banks as a friendly and welcoming place to send their children. This is furthered by Hilbert's use of enthusiasm, evident in phrases such as 'I am ... thrilled to announce' or her frequent use of exclamation marks that elicit excitement in her audience. However, she also ingratiates herself with the demographic of older parents and guardians when she remarks jokingly that 'if you're an old dinosaur like me, this might sound very confusing'. This acknowledgment serves to calm any readers who are confused by or concerned about technology or the idea of computer programming and compels them to see Hilbert as a trustworthy ally who will guide them through this 'spectacular learning opportunity'. Later in the piece, once Hilbert has asserted her knowledge of the subject and her prioritising student learning, she speaks specifically to parents and guardians who 'may be concerned', using low modal words like 'may' and 'some' to downplay the severity of any opposition. Her use of the imperative phrases 'rest assured' and 'have no fear' further assuages these concerns, and ending with the optimistic note that she 'look[s] forward to seeing [their] child's robotic creations' suggests that if she eagerly anticipates this, parents and guardians should be equally excited. Hence, Hilbert establishes herself as a trustworthy and passionate school leader, inviting parents and guardians to share in her enthusiasm.

The newsletter also presents the robotics and computer programming elective in a highly positive light, associating it with opportunity and potential. Hilbert's capitalisation of 'NEW SUBJECT' almost implies that she cannot contain her own excitement, and suggests this subject is incredibly important and worthy of the reader's attention. She also presents this as a natural next step in the school's record of 'embracing innovation' – words that connote forward-thinking and inventiveness. Hilbert then clearly delineates the different skills students will acquire by studying robotics, including 'creative thinking' and 'teamwork and active listening'. The fact that these are in a checklist format compel parents and guardians to want to tick these boxes for their own children and provide them with the well-rounded education Hilbert describes. Ending the list with '... and so much more!' further amplifies the value of the subject and suggests that there is an endless list of benefits for students. This therefore strengthens Hilbert's argument that the new subject is a useful elective that parents and guardians should encourage their children to embrace. This idea is also reinforced by the visual showing two primary school-aged students working on a robot and a laptop, representing the computer programming aspect of the subject. The students seem to be deep in thought, but also collaborating as one adjusts the robot and the other is speaking and operating the computer. This demonstrates the 'teamwork' and 'problem-solving skills' Hilbert lists above the visual, as well as showcasing 'real-world scenarios' as the students appear to be outside a classroom environment. Thus, Hilbert aims to convey the multifaceted advantages to studying robotics and computer programming as an appealing learning experience to elicit parents' and guardians' support for the subject.

Moreover, Hilbert extols the positive effect this subject will have on students and the school overall. She elevates it as a 'uniquely challenging mode of learning', with the word 'uniquely' implying that students would not otherwise be exposed to the breadth or depth of skills taught in the subject. This may subtly prompt parents and guardians to fear that their child is missing out if they do not take part – Hilbert then makes this explicit by instructing them: 'Don't miss out on this chance to give your child the 21st-century skills they need'. This imperative underscores how the responsibility lies with the parents and guardians

to encourage their children to take part, and failing to do so will compromise their ability to learn '21st-century skills'. Since most parents and guardians are likely to have been born in the 20th century, they may feel ill-equipped to provide such skills to their children, thereby making them more inclined to agree with Hilbert that this is a vital opportunity. Hilbert's inclusion of statistics that reflect the school's academic achievements of being in the 'top 5%' and 'top 10%' in the 'fundamental' areas of literacy and numeracy, respectively, is also designed to appeal to prospective parents and guardians in the community who are compelled to view Crestview Banks as a provider of both 'core subjects' and 'new initiatives'. The inclusion of 'top-tier engineers' to help teach the subject is also intended as a testament to the quality and rigour on offer, further evident in Hilbert's superlative language in stating that the subject offers the 'best thing we can do for our kids' (that is, preparation for the future) and describing the subject as 'one of the most holistic learning experiences available'. This culminates in the metaphor of 'let[ting] our little ones spread their wings' with the imagery evoking freedom and growth as a natural part of maturation, equating these new studies with taking flight – something exhilarating and liberating for students that parents and guardians are encouraged to appreciate. Ultimately, Hilbert's characterisation of this 'phenomenal opportunity' aids her in arguing that parents and guardians have an obligation to support their children's learning and appealing to the audience's fear of missing out on being involved in such a bold and valuable initiative.

Hilbert's newsletter piece targets both parents and guardians in the school community and those wishing to join, elevating their perception of Crestview Banks as a pioneering and effective place of learning that also prioritises student engagement and enjoyment. Thus, Hilbert compels parents and guardians to support their children in choosing the robotics and computer programming elective and all it has to offer.

### **ASSESSOR'S COMMENTARY**

This high-level response effectively covers a range of written and visual language while maintaining a clear focus on argument. The evidence provided is precise and well-analysed; the analysis uses metalanguage without merely labelling persuasive devices. The specific paragraph structure, while not essential, helps this response segment the material into sub-arguments (pertaining to Hilbert as a trustworthy source, the subject as exciting, and the learning outcome for students being valuable). This also allows for sentences that link the discussion back to the overall contention for a sustained discussion of how language is used to persuade. The reference to specific groups within the target audience also facilitates more specific analysis, and the visual material is fluently incorporated within the flow of the essay.