

Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE **A2 H450**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H050**

Report on the Units

June 2006

H050/H450/MS/R/06

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annersley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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F491 - Credibility of Evidence

General Comments

With the rapid rise in candidature bringing with it many Centres new to Critical Thinking, it was pleasing that candidates were able to access a very wide range of marks. A number of candidates evidenced a confident grasp of credibility criteria using these to good effect in assessing the evidence. However significant numbers were not able to identify relevant criteria and, although they attempted every question, they gained few marks. There were for example several instances of candidates writing comments such as 'What is this?' next to key terms in the answer booklet. This in turn impacted upon the overall performance of the cohort as a whole.

It was encouraging, however, that candidates, both strong and weak, engaged well with the topic, often giving spirited answers. Timing did not appear to be a problem in this session. The vast majority of candidates were guided by the space provided in the answer booklets, giving focused precise answers. Very few candidates used the continuation sheet at the end of the booklet and those that did, used it to good effect, labelling their answers clearly. There was very little evidence of candidates not reaching the end of the paper, although a few did not complete the judgement (an accessible mark), suggesting that they had failed to turn onto the last page.

Overall, where candidates identified the credibility criteria, they put these to good use in assessing the evidence presented and accessed the full range of marks. Where candidates did not evidence these criteria, their performance was significantly restricted, such that they struggled to reach above grade E. Confident application of these criteria is therefore an essential skill for success in this unit.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- 1 The answers that focused upon reporting in general and crimes abroad, i.e. what the question asked, often gained full marks.

Common mistakes were:

- to make no reference to reporting e.g. 'What is a crime in one country may not be considered to be a crime in another country.'
- to refer to the specifics of the plain spotters' case
- to make no reference to crimes abroad e.g. 'Reports might conflict as to what happened.'

- 2 (a) The majority of candidates were able to give reasons as to how the plane spotters could use these captions, even if they could not counter them in question 2(b). The weakest simply repeated or paraphrased the captions without any explanation. A minority failed to refer to the captions and discussed general aspects of the documents or the images themselves.

- (b) The strongest answers focused on the point that the photograph was taken a year ago, using this to good effect to suggest changes in the law or the political situation. Significantly more candidates were able to comment on the manner in which the information had reached the internet.

- 3** This was answered well by those candidates who correctly identified the credibility criteria. A significant number of these candidates pleasingly gained full marks for this question.

A key skill enabling success in this section is the ability to identify and apply credibility criteria. Weaker candidates identified the criteria, but failed to relate their answers to the documents. They assessed the personal evidence within the documents, which missed the focus of the question e.g. concentrating on the skills of the lawyer in Document 1, rather than the impact of this upon his authorship of the document.

Where candidates attempted to support their correct assessments with a quote from the text, these references were sometimes irrelevant e.g. the author of the plain spotters' website was usually correctly identified as having possible vested interest to appear innocent, but this was often supported by the quote, 'all camera equipment remained inside the vehicle at all times that day.' This is an example of vested interest, rather than providing a textual reference to indicate the motive for vested interest e.g. 'we were arrested under suspicion of taking photographs.'

Section B

- 4** (a) Most candidates made a good attempt at this question, with a pleasing number recognising bias, although a few did not understand the meaning of 'implied'.
(b) The majority were able to give a variation of a special group of people who had permission, with some being more creative than others in their application of this.
(c) Many recognised vested interest, although those who were unfamiliar with credibility criteria took longer to explain this.
- 5** (a) The vast majority correctly identified two points of weakness in the defence case, although a few weaker candidates gave evidence from the prosecution.
(b) Encouragingly, many were able to explain why these points were weak.
- 6** The majority of candidates correctly identified a claim, although some confused the sources, most notably attributing the claims of Lieutenant Balas to the Squadron Leader. There were only isolated instances of where the claim was inaccurately paraphrased.

A significant number of candidates in this session were unable to identify relevant credibility criteria and many challenged the claims on grounds of flawed reasoning rather than assessing credibility.

Very few attempted to state what must be supposed, but those that did often gained the full four marks. However a significant number supposed something that did not have any bearing on the criterion that they had chosen. Many felt that they had to suppose that the source was telling the truth, even when they were not assessing vested interest.

- 7** Very few candidates gained full marks on this question largely because they failed to evaluate both sources in relation to each other.

Section C

8 (a) and (b)

Those that understood corroboration and conflict were particularly successful in these questions, identifying simple precise points, such as there was corroboration that it was known that no photographs should be taken, or that there was conflict as to whether security could have been jeopardised.

Some scored less well because their points were not sufficiently closely related, e.g. the editor's claims that scanners 'were harmless' does not conflict with the HAF claim of 'used a scanner'. A significant minority of candidates did not evidence the required skills in this question, either listing points for and against the case, or supporting and challenging the claims made.

- (c) Few candidates gained more than two marks for this question. The stronger responses rarely identified more than 5 individual sources, whilst the weakest assessed the credibility of the documents.
- (d) Few candidates expressed their answer numerically, but the majority managed a qualitative assessment.
- (e) It was pleasing that candidates attempted to assess the credibility of each side of the dispute, even if these answers were superficial. Some accessed few marks because they simply listed credibility criteria without explaining how they applied. Those that appeared unfamiliar with credibility criteria were again hampered, although pertinent points were made about circumstantial evidence, even if it was not explicitly expressed as this.
- (f) The majority reached the judgement that the plane spotters were not aware of the fact that recording information might be illegal. Unfortunately this was often expressed as the judgement that they were innocent, which overlooked the precise point of the question.

Quality of Written Communication

The stronger candidates used a wider vocabulary of technical terms than in the January examination and ordered their answers well, accessing 4 or 5 quality of language marks. There were very few persistent spelling errors, although the plane spotters were not infrequently referred to as train spotters.

F492 01 / 02 - Assessing and Developing Argument

General Comments

The entry this year was nearly 25,000 (a considerable increase from January 2006) and it is not surprising that we saw the full range of performance on F492. Many candidates were well prepared and were able to write accurately and succinctly. It was pleasing to see so many candidates answering the 'assumption' questions so well. Performance on the multiple choice questions was again good showing that candidates cope well with the intellectual and time demands of these questions. The vast majority of candidates were able to finish the paper and there was no pattern of particular questions being missed out or left unfinished. Some weaker candidates did not finish the final further argument questions but it was unclear if this was due to lack of time or difficulties in responding to those questions.

The number of lines again guided candidates on the length of response needed for each question and worked well. There were a greater number of unfocused answers than the January 2006 session, perhaps reflecting the wider ability range of the much larger entry. In many cases, incorrect answers seemed to reflect inaccurate reading of the question rather than any lack of critical thinking ability and Centres may want to concentrate on this aspect of preparing candidates for the paper.

There were questions that were answered less well in general, particularly in the 'identify' questions (Question 21, Question 22 and Question 35) and the questions on flaws. The relatively low performance on these questions resulted in a somewhat low overall mark range for the written part of the paper. Many candidates used their own language or included extraneous information in Questions 21 and 22 and failed to access many available marks as a result.

A greater concern was that candidates continued to misunderstand the meaning of the word flaw. Many answers to these questions offered alternative explanations and counter arguments, rather than depicting the problem with the reasoning presented in the passage.

It is clear that this question paper provided a good test of candidates' ability and preparation. Some candidates seemed unprepared for the challenges involved and consequently scored low marks. Other candidates were well-prepared and had enough ability to score far higher marks.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

1 - 20

The general performance on the multiple choice section was very good and candidates coped well with a wide range of material and tasks. Incorrect answers were spread across all distracters. In all but the most difficult of the questions, the correct answer was picked far more often than incorrect answers.

21

Although the vast majority of candidates were able to accurately recognise the conclusion, it is concerning that so many incorrect answers were submitted, often of the form 'single sex schools are better than mixed schools'. Finding the conclusion, in this case signalled by 'so', is a basic skill in Critical Thinking. Candidates can expect the conclusion to be clearly stated in the passages and they do not need to paraphrase or use their own words in response to this question.

22

As with Question 21, many candidates failed to access marks through using their own language or paraphrasing the author's words. Many candidates wrote down evidence or wrote at great length. This type of question always requires candidates to use (exactly where possible) the author's own words. The marks are awarded for selecting the right part of the original text. Many candidates realised this of course, but did not always spot one or two of the more difficult reasons.

23

This question was generally well answered and responses showed that candidates' ability with 'assumptions' was generally very good. Many, if not all, the answers given in the mark scheme were submitted. Lack of accuracy was usually the distinguishing factor between the one and two mark answers. For instance a lack of reference to maths and English was common.

24(a)

This question was answered correctly by almost all candidates.

24(b)

This was a more demanding question and, although many spotted that there might be other reasons for the students lack of concentration, very few candidates were able to see the significance of 'all' in the text, meaning that answers lacked the necessary context. Centres could usefully focus their candidates' attention on words like: all; everyone; some; many, etc, as they are often very significant in the passages and questions.

25

This was well answered by many candidates showing that this type of 'weakness' question is widely understood. All the answers in the mark scheme were seen and, as with Question 23, it was inaccurate language rather than a lack of understanding that often seemed to limit candidates to 1 mark.

26(a)

Very well answered with the words 'traditionally female' appearing in the vast majority of answers.

26(b)

Although we there were some well expressed responses, many candidates found this question demanding. 'Ad hominem' was the most common incorrect flaw and those who did choose 'straw man' did not always understand that this flaw involves deliberately characterising or parodying an opponent's argument in order to knock it down. Many candidates again gave counter examples or counter arguments and appeared not to understand that they needed to show the problem with the author's reasoning, rather than arguing against it.

27(a)

Although candidates seemed to understand this question, they did not pick up on the 'more likely' in the question. Answers that did not have a sense of comparison between the single sex environment and mixed sex environment were not credited. Common answers such as '....have to assume that there are male teachers in a boys only school' missed the vital sense of assuming that there are *more* male teachers in a boys only school *than* in a mixed school.

27(b)

This was correctly answered by the vast majority of candidates.

27(c)

Answers were often focussed on boys compared to girls, rather than boys' schools - the issue asked about in the question. Only the best candidates spotted that the comparison that needed to be made was boys' schools compared to mixed schools. Many answers suggested that boys' schools were unpopular because they did worse than girls' schools, perhaps not stopping to realise that parents cannot send their boys to a girls' school.

27(d)

This was well answered and many candidates saw the selectivity in both using urban schools and referring to behavioural issues for boys' schools.

28

Many candidates saw the difference in the way the author had argued for boys and girls only schools, although some inaccurate language meant that only 1 mark could be awarded. Others correctly spotted the inconsistency between arguing for judging education by results and then arguing on the basis of social improvements.

29(a) and (b)

This was well answered by the majority of candidates.

30

Candidate answers were notable for their lack of cynicism about the way education is funded. However, many did use the word 'bribe' and clearly recognised the possibility of using money to buy a positive opinion.

31

Many candidates spotted this as an appeal to history (or similar) or an over-generalisation, although few answers showed why the author may *not* be able to generalise or why past events *cannot* necessarily be used as a guide to the future. Greater reference to the passage would have helped here – picking up the difference between technological advances and education would have given a firm foundation to say that it is not possible to generalise from one area to the other.

Unfortunately, many candidates wanted to argue against the author (space travel was an area of Russian expertise or that the internet was a British invention) rather than demonstrating the weakness of the reasoning.

32(a)

The answers here were very definitely better than the equivalent answers in January. Just about everyone scored something with a great many candidates being able to clearly identify the four things involved in the analogy. Centres could prepare candidates in the future by encouraging them to describe the analogy in terms of the arguments involved rather than just stating the things used in the analogy.

32(b)

The answers to this part of the question were weaker, with many candidates not referring to similarities or differences that would affect the arguments involved. Examples of this would be the candidates who offered, 'they are both to do with education' as a similarity. The dissimilarity was the better of the two parts, many candidates recognising the difference in scale of the things being compared. However, comments such as 'one is a lot more important than the other' again showed candidates lack of accurate expression restricting the marks they achieved.

33(a)

Correctly identified by the overwhelming majority of candidates.

33(b)

Most candidates were able to see something to be gained here – better concentration in difficult lessons was a common answer – and a good proportion were able to see it from both sides, showing that they understood the nature of the compromise. The most common answer was to comment on the fact that students would still be able to socialise with the opposite sex, whilst gaining the advantage of better results in segregated classes.

34

This was a demanding question. Weaker candidates were only able to observe that there would be an imbalance in numbers without commenting on whether this was a good thing or not. Some also commented that boys might be better at these subjects – again missing the point of the question. Amongst the better candidates, many recognised that it would not be important if the girls reverted to traditional female subjects later in their education and a few recognised the economic problems referred to in the mark scheme. Although this was clearly a demanding question, the variety and quality of the answers did show that many candidates are thinking and reading questions carefully and constructing targeted answers.

35

Responses tended to indicate once again that many candidates are unfamiliar with general principles and the way that they tend to be phrased. Those who were familiar with the idea, accurately stated the only principle in the passage and achieved the 2 marks available.

36

Some candidates chose to argue about the merits of single sex schooling rather than focussing on the issues surrounding their decline and thus scored few marks. However, many had a good grasp of the issues involved and were able to argue about the changing social and political climate that had caused a decline, rather than any issue of quality. It was also pleasing to see many candidates using the wording of the question again to form the conclusion to their argument. Candidates arguing to a different form of the intended conclusion was a persistent problem and it is to be hoped that future candidates will realise that the question is guiding them to a very specific conclusion.

37

Most candidates argued about the social restraints of single sex schools and we did not, therefore, see a wide range of arguments. Few tackled the religious issues that could have made interesting arguments. Phrasing of the final conclusion in this question was often poor, with examples such as ‘therefore we should not have single sex schools being common. Few candidates properly stated their conclusion as ‘therefore we should/should not adopt single sex schooling as a strategy for improving our education system. There is no doubt that candidates can and did write interesting and thoughtful answers to this question. Higher marks could be achieved from a little more attention to the detail of the conclusion and more evidence of argument structure in their writing.

F493 – Resolution of Dilemmas

General Comments

This was the first Unit 3 Paper under the new Critical Thinking specification and the response of the candidates overall was encouraging. Candidates evidently felt able to engage enthusiastically with the topic and many of them produced coherent responses that were often interesting and sometimes stimulating to read.

At the top end of the scale, there were very good answers which demonstrated that the candidates had understood what the questions required of them. At the other end, candidates who gained lower marks tended to fall into three categories:

- Those who did not finish. Candidates should be advised strongly to pay particular attention to the later questions to which are allocated the bulk of the overall marks for the paper;
- Those who wrote a fair amount, but whose arguments went round in circles without really getting anywhere. Candidates need to pay close attention to the structure of their own arguments as well as to that of other people's arguments;
- Those who wrote some articulate responses on the problems of dealing with terrorism or on the failings of government policies, but who did not address the specific demands of the question. Candidates need to ensure that they focus on what they are asked to do rather than to expound their own opinions about the topic covered in the resources booklet.

However, it must be stressed that many candidates did attempt - sometimes very successfully - to deal with the tasks in hand. There was a lot to admire in the way in which a significant number of candidates were able to think their way through the paper in order to demonstrate a high level of analysis, evaluation and communication.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

1(a)

To access the four marks candidates needed either to identify four relevant problems connected with using Document 1, or to identify and develop two problems. An example of a well developed problem could be: *'It would also be important to know where attacks occur, whether they are concentrated in particular areas, and the political or ideological context. None of this information is included in doc 1, which suggests that terrorism is decreasing, when it might simply mean that the nature of terrorism is changing.* (Note that when candidates are referred to a document the examiner will be looking for some indication of them actually using it.) Many candidates gained full marks on this question, while most achieved at least two. Some candidates though did write too extensively on this question, as on Questions 1(b) and 1(c). This is not necessary: focus, conciseness and clarity are the required qualities.

1(b)

This question on problems of definition was in general answered fairly well, and in some cases very effectively, though some candidates tended to dwell on the problems of terrorism rather than of definition. Many candidates identified the point along the lines of *'terrorism presents problems of definition because one person's 'terrorist' is another person's 'freedom fighter'*. To access all four marks for this question candidates needed to identify and develop two problems of definition. A good example of a well developed point would be: *'It is also difficult to define acts of terror because terrorism may take many different forms - a simple car bomb or the much more elaborate 9/11 terrorists acts.'*

1(c)

Candidates tended to do less well on this question, though a significant proportion gained 3 or 4 marks. Some candidates talked about the problems of terrorism or discussed what was wrong with the authorities' reaction to suspected terrorists but without relating these to problems of definition as such.

Question 2

This question was generally quite well answered. A few candidates failed to access most of the marks available for this question because they were evidently unaware of the difference between a choice/option and a criterion. However, many candidates managed to score six or more marks out of the ten available.

2(a)

Candidates had to identify two criteria concisely and this proved to be a straightforward enough task for most, with many selecting cost and public opinion.

2(b)

There were four marks available per criterion for identifying and explaining developing points of relevance. The more successful candidates were those who developed two points well. The majority of candidates managed to develop at least one point of relevance for each criterion. Examples of well developed points included: *'Cost is relevant to making decisions with regards to responses to the threat of terrorism because the government only had finite resources. If, for example, one of the responses would be to have more policemen on the streets, this would mean there would be fewer police doing other jobs - we could not pay for enough policemen to do everything or to be everywhere.'*

Question 3

This question carried 30 marks and was assessed in terms of three levels of response. Most answers were level 2. Very good level 3 answers were characterised by plentiful reference to the documents, with the candidate actually questioning what the information contained in the sources meant and how much weight the evidence could bear. Many candidates, however, do need to bear in mind the significance in any question of the instruction to 'critically assess' the material. The following is an example of critical and concise use of a source: *'Doc 5 states that everyone's right to life and right not to be tortured ought to be upheld, but it does not say when these guidelines were issued and whether they take into account the new threat of terrorism.'*

Most candidates did attempt to apply each of the two criteria to two choices. Many level 2 answers demonstrated some skill in terms of applying the criteria to the choices, but failed to gain higher marks because they did not show enough explicit evidence of evaluating the criteria. The following type of comments were typical of a level 3 response (in addition to relevant application of the criteria and some critical use of the sources):

'Effectiveness is a very important criterion for deciding about responses to terrorism and giving security forces a free reign would certainly be very effective in preventing terrorism as someone could be detained on the slightest suspicion. However, it could also lead to many people being wrongfully detained or even killed...'

'Overall, effectiveness is one of the most important criteria if the objective is saving lives...'

'Effects on civil liberties are also important because at what price do we want to save lives?.....'

'While civil rights are very important and definitely relevant, for measures to be effective they might have to be curbed somewhat...'

Question 4

4(a)

For four marks the candidate was required to frame two dilemmas arising from responses to the threat of terrorism. The majority of candidates, however, received only two marks because dilemmas were usually not clearly enough stated. Whilst many candidates did identify situations from which dilemmas could arise, fewer actually managed to refer clearly enough to the cost/benefit on each side. A significant minority appeared to be more or less unaware as to what constitutes a dilemma.

4(b)

The responses to this question were encouraging on the whole. Those candidates who failed to get beyond level 1 marks did so, in the main, for one or more of the following reasons:

- Answers which looked rushed, possibly due to writing too much on questions 1 and 2. Candidates need to be aware of how important the final question is to the paper as a whole;
- Evidence of lack of awareness of what a dilemma is;
- Failure to identify principles as such, or even to provide statements implying a principle, such as 'people have human rights'.

However, there was clear evidence from many centres of candidates being appropriately prepared for this question. This is reflected in the relatively large number of candidates who were able to access level 2 marks, and the significant minority who accessed level 3, with a small, though quite heartening, number of candidates who obtained marks in the high twenties.

Those candidates who did score top level marks were those who were able to consider in detail the application of principles to the detention of suspected terrorists, for example, that if unjust treatment of suspects was to cause a public outcry then the greatest happiness for the greatest number has possibly not been met. In general the stronger candidates were the ones who saw deeper into the dilemma and found more to discuss.

The majority of candidates who managed identify principles dealt with utilitarian/consequentialist versus deontological theories. Some did this well by ensuring that they applied the ethical principles to their dilemma in a direct and relevant manner. Others scored less well because they tended to employ a formulaic approach wherein they reproduced learned material with scant application to the dilemma.

It should be noted here that, although this question paper is not an ethics paper as such, ethical theories correctly and appropriately applied did yield some excellent responses. However, two points need to be stressed. Firstly, the more formulaic the approach the less chance there is of accessing better than a middling mark. Secondly, candidates need to be able to discuss their selected ethical theories with some degree of confidence and accuracy. Care, for example, needs to be taken with any treatment of Kantian ethics, which were sometimes misunderstood through being over-simplified.

Finally, it has to be stressed that those candidates who produced the best responses to this question were those who demonstrably attempted - albeit in an appropriately qualified fashion - to resolve the dilemma by coming to a clearly expressed conclusion based upon some synthesis of at least two principles.

F494/01 – Critical Reasoning

Section A - Multiple choice

Candidates accessed the full range of marks on the multiple choice questions.

General comments

There were many pleasing aspects of performance. Most candidates used their time wisely and were able to present an answer for each question. Many reacted well to questions which required them to think quickly and respond in ways which might have been unexpected.

There were some very high quality responses to individual questions, although few candidates sustained a high level of performance across the whole paper. It was pleasing to see that some candidates had a sound, thorough and perceptive grasp of argument structure and strength and weakness in reasoning. A significant minority of candidates were able to select key points for evaluation and focus their answers on the precise questions that were asked, demonstrating a good grasp of the skills of Critical Thinking.

The question paper discriminated well: the open ended questions and levels based mark schemes allowed candidates to perform at their own level and be rewarded appropriately.

A disappointing number of candidates were unclear about the meaning of 'analyse' and 'evaluate' which seriously affected their performance. As these are key terms in Critical Thinking and occur in the assessment objectives at both AS and A2 they are likely to be found in future question papers, Centres are advised to ensure candidates are solid in their understanding that to 'analyse reasoning' means to break it down into reasons, examples, evidence, intermediate conclusions etc, and that to 'evaluate' reasoning, means to assess how effective it is with reference to flaws, assumptions, use of evidence and the extent to which reasons provide support for the conclusion.

There was a tendency for candidates without the necessary analytical and evaluative skills to develop points at too great length, often with rhetorical flourishes, or to write interesting, but often irrelevant, discourses on the denotation of individual words and their placement within a clause or sentence.

A worrying number of candidates demonstrated lack of understanding of the passage and attributed weakness to the author when in fact the candidate had misunderstood the author's words or argument. Many candidates seemed unfamiliar with this kind of comment piece from the newspaper; again, this was a cause for concern, as the Specification states that at A2 candidates will be expected to deal with complex material and the question paper followed the format of the specimen in being based on an authentic article from a comment and opinion section of the quality press. Regular exposure to quality newspapers is strongly recommended to improve candidates' ability to respond to the level of argument and concept required.

There was evidence that candidates had attempted to apply the skills they had developed for Unit 3 Resolution of Dilemmas and, in some cases, this was done very effectively, but in others it was less successful.

A significant minority of candidates had no grasp of Critical Thinking concepts or vocabulary such as 'reasons' which 'support' a 'conclusion' or 'claim'. Instead, they littered their responses with 'statements' which 'reinforced' or 'highlighted' the author's 'point' in a 'powerful final summing up'.

Comments on Individual Questions

21

Although the question identified the conclusion of the article, and asked candidates to find the correct phrasing, the majority of candidates wrote down an intermediate conclusion. This is a cause for particular concern, as the task was simply an extension of AS work, albeit in a more complex argument.

22

Generally, many candidates performed the wrong task, describing or paraphrasing the meaning of the text rather than naming the structural element (e.g. *Intermediate conclusion*) and explaining its function in the *structure* of the argument (e.g. *Directly supports main conclusion*). However, a significant minority, who had some understanding of argument structure, performed this task well.

22(a)

A pleasing number of candidates identified that this was a response to an anticipated counter argument, although they tended to use words such as, 'arguing against' rather than the technical term, which would have been preferable.

22(b)

Many candidates correctly identified that this was an example, but were vague about its use in the argument. Some did not understand the distinction between evidence and example.

22(c)

Very few candidates accurately identified this as an intermediate conclusion. Many identified it as the main conclusion, even though Question 21 told them that the main conclusion was related to the legality of secondary action *and* they had (wrongly) identified a different intermediate conclusion from the first paragraph as the main conclusion. This seemed to indicate a very poor understanding of argument structure.

23

The question required candidates to analyse the argument in detail. Those candidates who responded by breaking it down into its structural elements were able to access good marks. However, a regrettable number of candidates either paraphrased the paragraph or evaluated it.

24

The full range of marks was accessed for this question. There were some perceptive and incisive responses which indicated an excellent understanding of Hattersley's techniques. These responses tended to recognise that Hattersley was using 'straw person' flaws whilst accusing his opponents of doing exactly that, and that he was dismissing counter argument by stating his own case with little support rather than responding to counter argument.

Some candidates identified rhetorical moves but regarded them as a strength because they would persuade, rather than as a weakness in the rational support for Hattersley's claims. A regrettable number restated, described or disagreed with the content of these three paragraphs with no attempt to evaluate how effectively Hattersley responded to hostility to secondary action.

A worrying number of candidates referred to (generally linguistic) techniques used by Hattersley in the first or second *stanza*.

25

This question provided a very small number of extremely high quality responses from candidates who were clearly able to evaluate the quality of the support for the main conclusion. Few candidates were able to evaluate the reasoning in terms of the flaws they would have learned at AS (the most prominent flaw in this passage was the repeated restriction of options) or to evaluate the use of examples appropriately – again, a skill which is tested at AS. Very few candidates were able to evaluate the extent to which the main conclusion was supported by the reasoning, either in terms of understanding relationships of support between reasons and (intermediate) conclusions, or of assessing the impact of any strength or weakness in the reasoning on the support for the main conclusion. As this is the main aim of evaluating reasoning – indeed, it is one of the main aims of Critical Thinking that candidates should be equipped with the skills to enable them to accept or reject claims on the basis of how well they are supported rather than from emotion or prejudice - all candidates ought to be prepared to attempt this task, even if they have difficulty in carrying it out.

26

This question produced some of the best responses to the paper. It was particularly pleasing that so many candidates were able to identify that this response did not address Hattersley's argument but only his example. Many candidates were able to demonstrate understanding of 'straw person' flaw and attacking the arguer rather than the argument. Candidates also evaluated the strength of the response. There were many candidates, however, who were unable to identify any weakness in the reasoning.

27

Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a basic ability to support a conclusion with reasons. The full range of marks was accessed. Very good candidates had a clear structure to their reasoning and included some complexity. They focussed on the precise conclusion they had been given. They gave thought to defining argument and action, and considered the relevance of the word 'sometimes' in the claim. They considered consequences and implications of the reasons and principles they used, and employed good examples. These candidates considered circumstances in which extending the right to argue to the right to act might be appropriate and circumstances in which it might not. The range of examples used was very impressive, ranging from Fathers 4 Justice through the suffragettes, terrorist attacks, war, peaceful protest and demonstration, legal action, Mahatma Gandhi's passive resistance and Martin Luther King's civil rights movement. Good candidates considered the role of democracy and conflicts of rights and were generally subtle and perceptive within the framework of the structure of their reasoning.

Some candidates were perceptive and thoughtful, but did not structure their reasoning with reasons to support a conclusion. They produced some interesting thoughts and discourses on the theme, often demonstrating insight and humour, but failed to access a significant proportion of the marks, as these were available for argument structure.

Weaker candidates tended to introduce their answer with, 'I believe,' and state their opinion at length rather than arguing for it. Such candidates tended to generalise from extreme examples and to use extreme reasoning, for example assuming that 'act' was 'violent action,' and concluding that the right to argue should therefore *never* be extended to the right to act. The weakest candidates ranted and questioned Mr Hattersley's intelligence.

Quality of Written Communication

Many candidates used language precisely and communicatively. Some were well able to use technical terms, such as 'intermediate conclusion,' or 'straw person flaw.' Regrettably, many were inclined to rhetorical and flowery language which communicated little real meaning.

Advanced GCE (Critical Thinking) (H450/H050)

June 2006 Assessment Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
F491	Raw	80	51	43	35	27	20	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F492	Raw	20	13	11	10	9	8	0
	UMS	180	144	126	108	90	72	0
F493	Raw	80	54	46	38	31	24	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F494	Raw	20	14	12	10	9	8	0
	UMS	180	144	126	108	90	72	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H050	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
H450	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H050	6.05	18.46	38.78	61.22	80.39	100	22,869
H450	10.75	29.57	50.12	70.36	87.67	100	1758

1758 candidates aggregated this series.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Information Bureau

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

