

Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE A2 H450

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H050

Report on the Units

January 2007

H050/H450/MS/R/07J

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The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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Chief Examiner's Report

There continues to be steady growth in the entries for Critical Thinking at AS level and there are signs that this will translate into a much greater entry for the A2 units this coming summer. The greater numbers entering for Unit 1 in January might suggest that many centres have decided to enter the two AS units in different sessions.

As in previous sessions, there was evidence that many candidates were, unfortunately, inadequately prepared to meet the specific demands of the Critical Thinking specification. Nevertheless, the overall level of candidate performance continues to improve. The individual reports from the Principal Examiners highlight this improved performance. However, there continue to be one or two areas where even well-prepared candidates are losing marks unnecessarily, and Centres are urged to act upon the advice offered in the individual reports.

F491 Credibility of Evidence

General comments

With approaching 13,000 candidates, the F491 entry has doubled that of last January. There was a spread of marks across the cohort and within Centres. The level of performance was significantly higher than in the June 2006 session. Candidates were largely focused upon what was required and the vast majority applied credibility criteria well.

The topic prompted more reflective answers than previously, with many candidates seeking to balance possible conflicting interpretations in a sensitive manner. Judgements were made both for and against the officers making appropriate decisions, though the majority judged in favour of the officers' decisions.

It was very pleasing to see strong candidates tackling Section B with answers that used suppositional reasoning to delve into the possibilities of the situation. Weaker candidates tended to gain their marks from the corroboration and conflict questions in Section C, a significant number gaining the full 12 marks with very precise answers.

The majority of candidates were guided by the space available in the answer booklet, giving succinct answers that focused directly upon what was being asked. Very few answers continued onto the final page and virtually all followed the instruction to write only in the spaces provided. The vast majority of candidates completed the paper without leaving gaps.

Overall, there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of candidates' answers this session. Fuller answers were succinctly given and targeted directly to the questions. There was evidence that candidates were building up their assessments towards their final judgement. Careful preparation was often evidenced, although approaches within Centres were not always consistent. Where candidates were not able to identify credibility criteria their performance was severely restricted.

Comments on individual questions:

Section A

- 1 Whilst many gained full marks, a higher proportion than usual referred to the specifics of the documents rather than the general context ie shipping disasters. Very few erred in the opposite direction by giving answers relating to general reporting devoid of any context.
- 2 (a) Most candidates scored at least one mark by identifying a relevant difference. These answers were wide ranging, though few focused on the angle of the ship. The strongest answers went on to explain how this difference would have affected the boarding. A few weaker candidates did not refer to the ship in the artist's impression and focused upon irrelevant differences.
- 2 (b) Most candidates recognised that the lifeboat looked quite full with only 20 passengers and many went on to articulate effectively that Officer Lowe's lifeboat would therefore have been very full with 58 people on board. Weaker candidates did not attach significance to the numbers of passengers in the caption and the weakest argued against Officer Lowe's claim.
- 3 Encouragingly many candidates approached full marks, identifying relevant credibility criteria which they applied to the documents in a meaningful way. Some wandered off task at times assessing individuals, whilst weaker candidates named one criterion then drifted on to another. Textual references were occasionally omitted and when given were not

always relevant. Stronger candidates recognised that the Senate Inquiry was a chapter heading and not the inquiry itself, but this distinction was not always appreciated.

Section B

- 4 (a) Many candidates were accurate, but some went too far, for example, 'It implies that there were enough lifeboats for *all* the people on board.'
- (b) Strong candidates gained both marks for this question, whilst others either challenged with no reference to the text, or simply offered a quotation.
- 5 (a) The majority of candidates gained this mark, although a few answers were so minimal that they could not be credited.
- (b) This question was a good discriminator of understanding of the issue. The strongest candidates were adept at explaining the differences between sandbags and people; the variations in people's weight, size and possessions; and the possibility of lifeboat damage. Weaker candidates gave responses unrelated to the capacity of the lifeboats, such as the ice in the sea or the time available for loading.
- 6 The strongest candidates demonstrated expert informed assessment. Almost all candidates correctly identified a claim made, whilst only the weakest resorted to paraphrase and the inaccuracies that tend to follow this. More candidates than in previous sessions were able to identify relevant credibility criteria, ability to observe being very popular. However, some stopped short after naming the credibility criterion and did not apply it to the situation eg 'Doctor Dodge wouldn't have expertise if.....'

A pleasing number attempted to state what must be supposed, even if some ended in a circular argument eg 'Dr Dodge wouldn't have the expertise to judge whether or not there were not enough men to launch the boats if he had no expertise in this area.' The weakest supposed something that did not have any bearing on the criterion identified, whilst some suggested that the truth was told or that the facts of the claim were true.

- 7 Whilst strong candidates easily accessed two marks, some did not apply the criterion to both sources. Some gave a terse reference to the second source without explanation eg '...whilst Doctor Dodge did not'

Section C

- 8 (a) It was pleasing that many candidates gained full marks on this question, even those that had scored few marks elsewhere. Encouragingly, very few looked for points of corroboration that were not directly relevant to the judgement.
- (b) This question was well answered although some candidates only accessed four of the available marks, because they gave two conflicting references without the statement of the point of conflict that they were intended to support.
- (c) Some centres focused directly upon the task, gaining very accessible marks. However when candidates were not specific about the nature of the dispute, or listed documents rather than sources within them, or stated the problem source without explanation, marks could not be awarded.

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- (d) For many the task was straightforward. However the weakest made only a qualitative assessment.
- (e) Pleasingly the majority assessed the sides in the dispute rather than individuals. Weaker responses only assessed the officers, whilst the weakest assessed the documents. Stronger candidates approached full marks but at times stated the criteria without explanation.
- (f) Only the strongest candidates made a judgement that was related to the question at the beginning of Section C. Some judged whether the officers were guilty of negligence or to blame for the deaths of many.

Quality of Written Communication

The standard of response was higher than in previous sessions with the vast majority of candidates using specialist vocabulary appropriately in fluent well ordered answers. A pleasing number therefore gained the full five marks.

F492/01/02 Assessing and Developing Argument

General Comments

General performance on this paper was both good and an improvement upon previous sessions. Of particular note were the excellent level of achievement on the multiple choice questions and a far greater level of accuracy and selectivity in the early 'analysis' questions (Questions 21 – 23). There were many candidates who found areas such as analogies and flaws very challenging and Centres are encouraged to pay particular attention to these important areas. There was more evidence of structure in candidates' further arguments, although many candidates again wrote arguments on areas that did not address the question. The overwhelming majority of candidates answered every question on the paper and there was no evidence of candidates having insufficient time to complete the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Once again, candidates dealt successfully with the demands of tackling 20 multiple choice questions in approximately 40 minutes. Both the overall mean mark and the distribution of responses to the questions showed that candidates worked accurately and had prepared for the particular demands of these questions.

Section B

Questions 21 – 23

The general level of performance was excellent with many candidates achieving full marks. There was far greater level of accuracy than in previous sessions, and far fewer candidates included extra evidence/examples that were not needed. Most candidates used the wording in the passage, in accordance with the explicit instruction in the question.

Question 24 and Question 32(a)

Both of these questions asked candidates about examples – an area that has not been extensively examined previously. Few candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of the use of examples in arguments. In question 32(a), many candidates merely repeated the text (perhaps misunderstanding the instruction to 'use' material from the passage) without any further analysis or evaluation. Although many examples used in arguments in the Documents were weak, this is not inevitable, as demonstrated by the use of Bhutan as an example. Good candidates were able to both show why this was a strong example, clearly showing how the suddenness of the introduction of TV, or the previously isolated nature of a country not exposed to other western influences, could lead to a cause and effect relationship being established.

Question 25(a)

Most candidates were able to identify assumptions in arguments and most candidates scored one mark. The higher grade candidates understood the need for a qualifying term – most of/majority of etc – and were awarded 2 marks.

Question 25(b)

Performance on this question was slightly disappointing and most candidates questioned the evidence rather than looking at the way it is used. Thus, some candidates asked how the author knew that the figure was 62% or suggested that children might not be frightened after all. However, some candidates did get at the heart of the problem – that the evidence is about movies on video/DVD when the argument is about watching television.

Questions 26(a), 26b, 33(a) and 33(b)

The great majority of candidates were able to clearly identify a flaw in the author's reasoning. There were fewer correct answers for 33(a). It was intended that the wording of part (b) would indicate to candidates that they had to explain the problem with the reasoning but, many candidates either gave a counter argument or described the flaw. Some candidates repeated the appropriate section of text without any comment. Strong answers showed how the lack of support/reasoning for the large jump from pessimism to depression to hospital beds full of depressed people made the conclusion very unlikely, or showed how the fact that everyone believes something does not automatically mean that it is right.

Question 27(a)

Many candidates recognised that there could be other factors involved that would make the causal relationship hard to 'prove' or that the relationship could be correlational. Many candidates gave an answer that was really no more than a repetition of the question.

Question 27(b)

Almost all candidates scored 1 mark. The most common answer was that education had improved.

Question 28

Many candidates did not explain their answer, stating only that not thinking is not bad for health. Better answers showed how not thinking could lead to relaxation / a rest from day to day worries. Very few candidates addressed the question directly, making a direct reference to the situation of watching TV.

Questions 29(a) and (b)

There was a concerning lack of accuracy in the identification of the parts of this analogy. Although credit was awarded to answers that swapped 'complex' for modern or 'increased intelligence' for increased 'IQ', many responses showed that candidates needed to think more carefully about the content of analogies. Many candidates indicated that the author was arguing that the increasing complexity of TV programmes *did* lead to increased intelligence and did not spot the comparison of two events that would *not* happen.

In 29(b), many candidates described the analogy, rather than evaluating it. However, there were some very good answers which appreciated the very different nature of the two things and most of the possible answers given in the mark scheme were submitted.

Question 30

Both answers in the mark scheme were given and the vast majority of candidates scored well on this question.

Question 31

As with question 25(a), most candidates scored at least one, but comparatively few scored the extra mark for recognising that only some/most of the broadcasts needed to have an American theme to them.

Question 34

This question differentiated well. More able candidates recognised the implicit comparison at work in the text and question, giving answers that included phrases such as 'less impact or 'little impact in comparison'. Weaker candidates had misread/misunderstood the passage and did not appreciate that the programmes put out by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service were different to those of the 46 satellite channels.

Question 35

The vast majority of candidates saw the author's somewhat over-stated description and recognised that the meaning was an unstoppable torrent or similar.

Section C

Question 36

This was one of the least well answered questions on the paper and clearly many candidates did not know what a general principle is. Many gave answers that were points already made by the author (ie statements that were already in the original passage) or gave points that were too specific to be applicable in situations beyond the one at hand in the passage, perhaps by referring to specific health issues.

Question 37

Well answered by many candidates who appreciated that TV had only distorted the debate if the candidates with snappy one liners etc went on to be elected. Some candidates lost the mark by giving two options – ‘we would need to know if they were the ones with the best appearance or not’ – despite the fact that the question clearly asks for a response to a specific case.

Question 38

The complete range of answers was seen, and candidates are to be congratulated on their level of understanding and thoughtfulness about his comparison. Some lost marks through ignoring the explicit instruction to include examples, but others were able to give clear, specific examples of the dangers of smoking/alcohol. Most pleasing was the number of candidates who were able to contrast the proven risks/dangers of smoking and alcohol to the suggested risks/dangers of watching TV.

Questions 39 and 40

Almost every candidate gave an answer to these two questions and many showed that they clearly understood the need for intermediate conclusions and structured their arguments accordingly. In question 39 sophisticated arguments were produced, many of which alluded to the role of TV in promoting healthier lifestyle and food, or successfully argued that if poor diet and lack of exercise could be shown to be the main factor in the rise of obesity, then it could be argued that watching TV was not the cause. In question 40, some answers tackled the role of individual freedoms and responsibilities, whilst others recognised the dangers of a restriction (reduced information and entertainment) and argued against it accordingly.

However, many answers contained reasoning which did not support the conclusion or cases where candidates were supporting a different conclusion to the one asked for in the question. In Question 39, some candidates produced quite good arguments that showed that obesity was the result of poor diet/fatty foods/lack of exercise, but lost credit as the arguments never mentioned watching TV. In question 40, many candidates argued about whether watching TV was, or was not, dangerous (perhaps picking up on the title of Document 1) rather than arguing about whether or not TV broadcasts should be restricted. This was somewhat puzzling as so many candidates had the correct answer to question 21. Too many candidates failed to write down the main conclusion.

F493 Resolution of Dilemmas

The response of the candidates to the Unit 3 examination was again encouraging. Although the issues relating to wind farms may be somewhat different to those raised in the June 2006 question paper, candidates were, in the main, able to engage enthusiastically with the topic and many of them produced coherent and reasoned responses that made for some interesting reading.

Performance showed an improvement compared to June 2006. Candidates seemed to read the questions more effectively and understand better what was expected. There was, on the whole, a firm grasp of the skills needed in critical use of sources. Formulating dilemmas again presented problems for some candidates, but their knowledge and understanding of what constitutes an 'ethical principle' seemed much better founded.

At the top end of the scale, there was a fair number of excellent answers which demonstrated that the candidates had understood what each question required of them. On the whole there were few candidates who did not seem to know what was required of them, a sign that most centres are preparing their candidates appropriately, and at best very thoroughly. There were fewer candidates who did not attempt all the questions, although there was again significant evidence of candidates not doing full justice to the demands of Question 4.

The best candidates tended to be those who not only produced relevant and clearly structured arguments, but who also referred closely, relevantly and critically to the evidence contained in the Resources Booklet. It should be noted very carefully that each question, in one way or another, requires of the candidate that they adopt an analytical and evaluative response to the evidence provided.

It should be noted that there were some candidates, albeit a small minority, who produced essays connected with some of the problems connected with energy use, and the failings of government, while more or less ignoring the actual requirements of the questions. Candidates should focus on what they are asked to do rather than merely expounding their own opinions about the topic covered in the Resource Booklet.

However, it must be stressed that most, candidates did attempt - sometimes very successfully - to deal with the tasks in hand. There was much 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

- 1 A good treatment of two relevant problems was sufficient to achieve the six marks available for this question. A good answer is one that, per problem identified, contains some brief explanation/development of the problem and reference to the document. Candidates generally found this straightforward, and a large fraction of them gained full marks. (Some candidates, though, wrote erroneously that the figures for power generated did not tell you how long the power was for, so that you could not tell how significant they were.)
- 2 Candidates generally found this question very straightforward, with the majority getting all six marks, although there was a large variation in the amount of space needed to achieve this. The better candidates completed the task in 5 or 6 lines. Some weaker candidates took well over a page, with numerous repetitions, which clearly would have led to time management problems. A much more effective approach was that used by candidates who clearly identified a relevant factor - eg the appearance/aesthetics of wind turbines - followed a brief explanation/development/ reference to the relevant document.

- 3** This question was generally done well. The better candidates set out a plan of what they were doing, and used paragraphs (often with line spaces for more clarity). Most candidates did recognise the need to identify two criteria as applied to two choices. Weaker candidates had little structure to their answers.

A significant discriminator in this question tends to be the extent to which candidates recognise and act upon the instruction to 'where appropriate critically assess' the evidence provided in the Resource Booklet. Only a minority attempted a clear and explicit critical assessment of the sources. This did prevent many good candidates accessing the highest level of marks available for this question. This is not to say, however that candidates are required to produce lengthy or generic source evaluation. Rather, the requirement is to show selectively how some of the evidence provided can be usefully applied to support points being made while at the same time pointing out possible limits and weaknesses.

Another significant difference between the best responses and those that were of a satisfactory standard lay in the candidate's ability or otherwise to assess explicitly the 'relevance' of each criterion in helping us to make decisions. Again, this requirement is clearly indicated in the question. Many good candidates were given credit where such an assessment was implied, but a more explicit reference to the relevance/importance/usefulness of each criterion - in the context of the choices being discussed - sometimes made the difference between a good level of response and a very good one.

- 4 (a)** Only a minority of candidates scored more than 50% on this question. Most were able to present a choice between two mutually exclusive options, but few went on to point out the undesirable outcome of each option. There was a significant variation between centres with this one, however, with some centres' candidates achieving all 4 marks, including weaker candidates. Given the importance of having a clearly defined dilemma to deal with in Question 4(b) it is important that candidates have experience of identifying and framing/explaining dilemmas.
- (b)** On the whole, candidates understood what was required. Many used sources quite well to support reasoning. Some application of theories was very well thought out, but often it was quite naïve (though an improvement on June 2006). Most candidates were able to outline a number of moral/ethical principles, although far fewer could put them accurately into the context of energy needs with. Many candidates wrote more about dead philosophers than about UK energy needs, and many used quaint 18th century language.

While it can be a very useful and rewarding approach to use some of the major ethical theories to help resolve the dilemma, candidates should guard against an unconnected recitation of such theories. At issue is how they may be usefully and relevantly applied. In cases where candidates chose not to use such theories, it still proved possible to produce good responses. However, there was a significant number of cases where candidates failed to identify clearly principles as such ie what it is that we should or should not do, as a general rule: what constitutes good or bad behaviour. In such cases candidates were unable to access the two higher levels of marks.

While many candidates produced answers that dealt with parts of the question reasonably well, relative few candidates produced complex arguments, for example pointing out how a single ethical standpoint could be interpreted to support either side of a dilemma; those who did were generally the strongest candidates. To do really well in this type of question a candidate needs to demonstrate that they are able to build a relevant argument that is clearly an attempt to come to some

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resolution of the dilemma they have framed. This requires careful attention to the structure of their argument: reasons, evidence/development, counter-arguments, intermediate conclusions (a judgement, for instance, on the relevance/usefulness of a particular principle/ethical theory in terms of its application to the dilemma.) and conclusion.

Caveats apart, on the whole there was much encouraging evidence that Centres and candidates seemed to be coming to terms quickly with the particular demands of the Unit 3 question paper, as well as responding to the opportunities to produce interesting, skilled and engaged arguments.

F494 Critical Reasoning

General comments

This question paper produced a wide range of responses, with most candidates attempting the task required. This represents an improvement on the June 2006 paper, when many candidates did not differentiate between analysing and evaluating.

Many candidates wrote extremely good evaluations of the quality of the reasoning in the article, and some were outstanding. There were also some very high quality further arguments, which were perceptive, insightful and well structured.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1 – 20

Candidates demonstrated a range of performance on the multiple-choice questions.

- 21** Most candidates understood that they should give a name such as 'intermediate conclusion' to the element of the reasoning. A minority paraphrased or described the meaning of the text. A significant number of candidates confused the intermediate and main conclusions.

Candidates were generally less well able to explain the function of the element in the argument; many gave a definition of an intermediate conclusion, for example, rather than referring specifically to the text; for example, 'this is an intermediate conclusion supported by the reasoning in paragraphs 3 – 4'.

- 22** Most candidates were able to identify two key intermediate conclusions and the evidence, which was pleasing. They were less able to split sentences into reason and intermediate conclusion.

- 23** Candidates accessed a wide range of marks, including in some instances, maximum marks. It was pleasing that most were able to make intelligent comment about weaknesses in the argument, and many were able to evaluate the quality of support for the claim that 'the streets must be seen to be safe', considering how damaging the weakness really was. Few candidates addressed the second, and unsupported, part of the claim, 'whatever the cost'. Those who understood that only half the claim was supported accessed very high marks.

The bullet points are intended as a guide for candidates rather than a straitjacket. Candidates are marked holistically with the overall quality of their responses in mind. It does not, therefore, necessarily have a negative effect on candidates' answers if they ignore one of the bullet points but make good comments on others. Candidates performed better in their evaluation of flaws and evidence than they did in their evaluation of the impact of assumptions and how well reasons support intermediate conclusions. However, candidates who were able to comment on these last two points tended to access higher marks, because some of the most significant points to be made fell into these areas.

The very best answers were arguments which supported their conclusions about the quality of the reasoning with reference to specific strengths or weaknesses.

- 24** This question discriminated particularly well at the top end. Many candidates were able to identify the contradictions and confused reasoning in this second part of the argument. Weaker candidates were let down by poor literacy skills.
- 25** This question differentiated well. Candidates accessed a range of marks, with a significant minority writing sound, thorough and perceptive arguments which were rewarded at the top of level 4. A great many candidates identified the problems inherent in the conflict between safety and freedom, defined terms and structured their thoughts into a coherent argument, with a number of perceptive reasons, coming to a clear conclusion. A significant number of candidates qualified the conclusion, showing a sophisticated understanding of the nuances of the issue. Many candidates included a counter argument rather than a counter assertion, and attempted to respond to it. Some responses to counter argument were spot on, and really did answer the points made. Others simply dismissed them, which was less effective.

Although in their further arguments at AS candidates are not disadvantaged by approximating plausible sounding evidence in order to illustrate that they understand the role of evidence in argument, at A2 candidates who use blatantly invented evidence tend not to sound effective or persuasive. As such, candidates often also have weak logical links between their evidence and the reasons they support with this evidence, they tend to access only low marks.

Candidates also need to beware of using reasons and intermediate conclusions where there is no relationship of support. Some candidates randomly labelled their sentences as Ev, R1, IC etc with no understanding of how an intermediate conclusion might follow from one or more reasons.

The weakest candidates tended to rant about how the government ought to make things safer for us, and did not write an argument about whether freedom had a meaning if there was no safety.

Quality of Written Communication

Most candidates used acceptable, coherent language. Candidates gaining the highest marks for QWC were those who used technical critical thinking terminology accurately and precisely, and who communicated meaning and complexity precisely, without undue rhetorical flourishes.

There was a worrying number of candidates for whom the English language was a blunt instrument, for example:

“Thus concluding i dont think the reasons for the argument wer’e very well thought through as I have detected a lot of floors.”

“‘The medieval ambition to....scrapped.’ This is a bad assumption as this refers to medival times when life was v different and social deprevation wasn’t such a big issue.”

**Advanced GCE Critical Thinking (H450/H050)
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
F491	Raw	80	50	42	34	26	19	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F492	Raw	120	74	65	56	47	39	0
	UMS	180	144	126	108	90	72	0
F493	Raw	80	61	54	47	40	34	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F494	Raw	120	70	61	52	43	35	0
	UMS	180	144	126	108	90	72	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie 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	7.5	21.1	40.6	63.0	80.4	100.0	2173
H450	33.3	66.7	66.7	91.7	100.0	100.0	12

519 candidates aggregated this series.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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