



ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE

CRITICAL THINKING

Unit 2: Assessing and Developing Argument

F492/01/RB
F492/02/RB

RESOURCE BOOKLET

Monday 12 January 2009
Afternoon

Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Use Documents 1 and 2 to answer all the questions in Sections B and C.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- This document consists of 4 pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Document 1: Raising the limit – is 18 too young?

Excessive drinking by young people has seen a 20% rise in hospital admissions in England over the last 5 years. Last year 148477 people were taken to accident and emergency with alcohol related injuries – double the previous year. Research by the World Health Organisation found one in eight deaths among young men in the UK is caused by alcohol abuse. Sadly, there is no reason to believe that the statistics underestimate the problem. Significantly, Professor Bellis from the Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University states that ‘hospital statistics grossly underestimate the number of young people drinking alcohol in ways that will damage their health.’ It is clear that the current legal age for purchasing alcohol* allows vast numbers of young people to damage their health.

1

A spokesman said that the Government believes the majority of people drink sensibly so a change in the law is not required. However, the Government is bound to say that as they collect nearly £13 billion in tax revenues from alcohol each year. Their policies are based on financial selfishness and a desire to keep the drinks industry happy. The views of the Government on this matter can be dismissed.

2

The current legal age limit – which is very low – promotes excessive drinking in teenagers. The number of teenagers who drink regularly has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. The UK has one of the worst problems in Europe for underage drinking with a fifth of children aged 11–15 drinking at least once a week. 24% of 15 year olds admit to having been drunk at least 10 times in the past year. Alcohol is also getting cheaper, costing 54% less in real terms than it did in 1980. It is not surprising that so many 15 year olds can afford to buy alcohol. If we do not legislate to change the situation, the problems for our teenagers will become increasingly severe.

3

An increase in the legal age for drinking would give the helpful impression that drinking is unacceptable. The recent increase in the age limit for buying cigarettes** is an excellent example of how a change in the law can change attitudes. A change in the law would fit with previous attempts to curb excessive drinking. During the first world war, strict laws were passed to prevent excessive alcohol consumption from undermining the war effort.

4

The current age limit is the cause of many serious problems and consequently there is an urgent need for action to stop young people drinking and being harmed by alcohol. Raising the age limit to 21 would be a sensible solution. This is supported by the views of a variety of experts, such as the Chief Constable of Cheshire. We should raise the age limit for drinking alcohol to 21 as a matter of urgency.

5

*The current legal age for purchasing alcohol in England and Wales is 18 years old.

**This was raised from 16 to 18 in 2007

Document 2: French wisdom

Much is made of the supposedly better drinking culture in France where the legal age for drinking alcohol is lower than in Britain. French children grow up with wine and it is said that this educates them about the dangers of excessive drinking. However, it doesn't work: the French drink a massive 56 litres of wine per person per year which is far higher than many other European countries. Surveys also suggest that young people in France are drinking more and more imported beers so all the familiarity with wine has not stopped them drinking. The French approach would be like giving heroin to our children to educate them about the dangers of drug abuse – obviously a ridiculous idea. If further proof were needed, the percentage of all deaths due to liver disease in France is about twice that in the UK. Clearly, we should not be looking to France as a way forward.

