GCE

Critical Thinking

Report on the Units

January 2009

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Advanced GCE Critical Thinking (H450)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Critical Thinking (H050)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Chief Examiner Report

This was an unusual session in that we had 4 papers on the legacy specification and 2 new AS papers. Most centres have opted to take the new specification and the entries on the legacy AS specification were dramatically down on previous sessions. The available evidence would suggest the profile of the entry is similar to previous sessions and this followed through to candidate performance that was also largely in line with previous sessions. There were a high proportion of re-take candidates and we have ensured that the grade boundaries that we have set have not given any undue advantage or disadvantage to re-take candidates.

Areas in which the performance on the 4 units differed from previous papers were few. The multiple choice in F492 was a little less well done whilst the performance on the multiple choice in F494 was slightly improved. We saw candidates who were completely unprepared, especially at A2, and we continue to see candidates who have only a limited familiarity with the basic ideas and language of the subject.

As always, I would encourage centres to take careful note of the many useful specific comments made by the Principal Examiners. These can easily be used as a guide to improve candidate performance.

F491 Credibility of Evidence

General comments

The full range of ability and marks was seen in this examination and very few were unable to finish it. It is encouraging to see Centres where teachers have clearly familiarised themselves with past papers and mark schemes and are helping students to prepare well for answering the questions. The standard of performance declined significantly for many candidates from section A to section C. The areas which still need to be addressed more fully are suppositional reasoning (for q5) and comparison of credibility (for q7e)

For the vast majority of candidates who had been well prepared, this paper was in line with previous papers and presented no serious problems. The reference in the resource booklet to the Home Office as "the former department responsible for security, law and order" was interpreted by some candidates to mean that it no longer has such responsibility; this interpretation was accepted by the mark scheme. It did not have a significant effect on the outcome.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

Q1   Candidates who understood that this question referred to the general context of reporting on the fairness of government policies did well in this question. However, many gave answers that were too general and could have been applied to any reporting, or were too specific and, despite the rubric, referred to the DNA database. A minority simply launched into an assessment of the documents presented and some wrote their answers as questions, which are not acceptable as they could refer to the strengths of reporting.

Q2   The weaker candidates clearly had little idea of the meaning of the word "inference" and simply quoted sentences from the text, while some failed to confine their answers to paragraph 2 about DNA. Many misinterpreted the "probability of a chance match" as the "chance of a match" and consequently drew the inference that the system was ineffective (in catching criminals). Only a minority realised that the probability quoted was an advantage of the system.

Q3   Answers showed a marked improvement in quality with an increasing number of candidates able to score full marks with brief, but clearly focussed answers which stated and applied a credibility criterion, gave an assessment and referred to the supporting text. The majority of candidates gained a significant proportion of their total marks from this question alone partly because some credit was given for answers that showed an understanding of the relevant criteria without explicitly naming the correct criterion.

There was notable confusion between reputation and vested interest to maintain that reputation (either by misrepresenting the truth or by telling the truth) and many candidates who identified reputation as the criterion could be credited for vested interest. A minority used reputation correctly and showed a pleasing awareness of current events by citing government departments' recent poor reputation for trustworthiness in the context of losing electronically held personal data. Vested interest caused problems in other ways as well. Candidates should state clearly whether they are using VI to tell the truth or VI to misrepresent it. They should also state what the vested interest is in order to distinguish it from bias. Stating that there is no vested interest means that the criterion being used is neutrality so a few students lost marks because they then repeated themselves by

answering about neutrality itself. The tendency to refer to individual sources without reference to the document seems to have diminished. For example, very many candidates gained credit by identifying that the evidence of the senior forensic scientist lent expertise to document 4. However, a fairly common error was failing to give appropriate supporting evidence from the documents.

Many candidates wrote RAVEN or a variation of it to remind themselves of the credibility criteria. However, centres should be aware that concepts such as reliability, corroboration and evidence are not acceptable criteria in this question.

Section B

Q4 Very few candidates gained any marks here, with the majority giving some variation on the theme that what must be true was that "the people really were innocent" or "the innocent people retained in the database will never commit a crime". Of those answers that attracted credit many gained one mark with answers that were too specific to be necessary conditions and only a very small minority referred to the general case of the retention of DNA giving rise to some form of disadvantage.

Q5 This question discriminated well between those who read and understood the rubric and those who did not; a few failed to identify any claim whatsoever or identified a claim from the wrong person – usually the Information Commissioner instead of the NO2ID co-ordinator or the "Top Judge" in doc 3 for the Appeal Court Judge. A common error was to state that the judge's claim was that the database was biased towards ethnic minorities. The candidates who did quote a claim correctly generally managed to gain some credit for how a relevant criterion strengthened or weakened the credibility of the claim although for some of these, the credit had to be obtained from what was purported to be their supposition (which then attracted no further credit). Most achieved 3 marks for each question with only a very small minority gaining the full five marks available here.

It has been accepted practice for students to reduce the time spent writing by using dots in place of some words in claims; this will continue to be accepted in the final F491 paper in summer 2009 but will not be acceptable in the F501 paper where the claims will be shorter. In F491 students should not truncate claims.

Q6 Few candidates gained full marks on this question largely because they failed to evaluate both sides, only saying something about the one they deemed more credible. It is necessary to apply the chosen criterion to the two people rather than simply to name the criterion.

Section C

Q7 (a) Most candidates seemed to understand what corroboration is and creditworthy answers focussed on the chance of mistakes happening, the support for expanding the database and the unfairness of the database as areas of corroboration. Some candidates correctly identified these areas but gave text references that were too tangential to gain credit. References to the text must state their sources to gain credit.

(b) As for (a) with conflict focussing on the fairness or otherwise of the database and whether or not the database should be expanded.

(c) This question was reasonably well done but despite the rubric at the top of question 7, there was much confusion here as to what the sides were representing. Only the better prepared candidates identified the sides as relating to the fairness or otherwise of the database. As usual there was a large number who simply identified the sides as "for" and "against" and many candidates identified them in relation to

whether or not the database should be expanded. Regardless of the sides identified, credit was gained for individual sources correctly placed in relation to each other.

(d) Most had some understanding of what was meant by weight but some gained no credit as they focussed on the weight in favour of expanding the database rather the unfairness of the current policy.

(e) Many candidates did manage to say something here that was worthy of credit although they tended not to treat each of the sides as a whole but to deal with specific sources, often the senior forensic scientist or information commissioner who were not on either side. Many of those who did refer to appropriate sources failed to show how the chosen criteria applied to these sources. This question was answered very poorly.

(f) Most candidates came to a correct judgement in the light of their assessment in the earlier parts of the question.

F492/01 & 02 Assessing and Developing Argument

General Comments

Candidate performance on this paper was broadly in line with previous sessions. It would be unwise to form too many conclusions as the cohort is clearly different (and much smaller) than previous sessions as the majority of centres have switched to the new specification. There were signs that candidate responses relating to assumptions and evidence are continuing to improve. It was, however, disappointing to see so few good further arguments.

Comments on individual questions

Multiple choice
Performance this session on the multiple choice was slightly down compared to the previous two sessions. The difference of about 1 mark may represent slightly harder questions or may be a feature of the smaller cohort. Most of the questions differentiated between candidates, the exception being question 11 which was found very difficult by all candidates. Question 14 was also difficult and only a small proportion of candidates picked the correct answer. Both of these questions involved more difficult intermediate and main conclusions and this clearly caused confusion amongst candidates. Centres may wish to focus on this skill for future questions. At the other end of the scale, question 2 was found to be the easiest question.

Section B

Question 21a
The majority of candidates gave the correct answer. Some missed the 'as a matter of urgency' and were awarded 1 mark.

Question 22
Well answered by the vast majority of candidates. The most common mistake continues to be adding evidence/additional information with the reason or giving an answer entirely composed of evidence, such as the figures about hospital admissions.

Question 23
Although the passage tries to signal the arrival of the intermediate conclusions towards the end of the argument, comparatively few candidates seemed to understand this. There is, perhaps, a connection between the lower performance in this question and a candidate's difficulty in phrasing their own intermediate conclusions in Q38 and Q39.

Question 24
A great many correct answers. The most common mistake was to write the entire counter argument in the reason space.

Question 25
Whilst many candidates understood that the ages of the young people had to be between 18 and 21, very few realised that they did not all need to be between these ages. Too many candidates suggested that the young people had to be under 18 which suggests that they had not fully understood the argument presented in the passage.

Question 26
We saw a lot of good answers that showed candidates can now spot problems with the way arguments use evidence. Most commonly candidates realised that the evidence referred to all age groups and not just young people. However, very few connected with the idea of the 'increase in people taken to A&E', rather than just a steady number.

Question 27a
Responses variously and correctly referred to as an appeal to expertise, authority or experience. A significant number of candidates gave an 'appeal to fear' as an incorrect answer.

Question 27b
Answers ranged from a basic comment about the reference to a Professor to fully worked answers about the nature of his place of work, experience and presumed expertise. It was good to see that candidates were able to see this issue from both sides, with many candidates commenting that his research is particularly related to Liverpool which may mean a lack of knowledge about issues countrywide.

Question 28a
Most candidates correctly identified the ad hominem flaw. The most common incorrect answer was straw man and centres would be wise to ensure that candidates can see the difference between these two ideas.

Question 28b
After so many sessions of this paper, it was disappointing to see so few good answers. The author attacks the government's character *instead* of their argument. Only the best answers were able to get this idea across.

Question 29
Lots of really good answers that correctly spotted that the older age group had to be as bad as the 11-15 year old group. Incorrect answers varied from suggestions that the 15 -18 year old group had to be a lot worse (without specifying what they were worse at) to confused answers suggesting that the older group drank more sensibly.

Question 30
As usual for this type of question, we saw mainly correct answers. Just about all candidates suggested that the young people might have lied!

Question 31
The passage contains evidence relating to the current situation and changes that have led to the situation getting worse. Candidates needed to select the correct evidence in order to answer the question correctly.

Question 32
A challenging question as candidates were asked to compare the changes in age limits rather than comparing alcohol and cigarettes. Weaker answers made reference to simple differences between the two. A surprising number of candidates appear to think that alcohol is not very addictive! The best answers showed a full understanding of the place of cigarettes and alcohol in teenage culture, the difference in 16, 18 and 21 in terms of maturity and the fact that the change for cigarettes was preceded/supported by other changes (such as smoking only being allowed outside) which had not happened for alcohol. A surprisingly large number of candidates tried to show similarities and differences despite the clear 'or' in the question rubric.

Question 33
One of the best answered questions. A very pleasing number of candidates got straight to the point, commenting that drinking imported beer was not the same as drinking it to excess.

Question 34a
Most candidates were able to give the correct answer. We still saw too many answers in the form of a question ('we would need to know if it was lower or higher') which were awarded 1 mark as with previous sessions.

Question 34b
Just about all candidates spotted the relationship between liver disease and alcohol, but most overstated it by saying that alcohol was the sole/only cause. As many strong answers suggested, it is only necessary to assume that most of the liver disease was caused by alcohol consumption.

Question 35a
We saw very few strong answers. The majority of candidates immediately swapped 'growing up with wine' for the completely different 'giving wine to children'. Only a handful of candidates realised that the analogy is trying to argue that French approach is ridiculous on the basis of the accepted ridiculousness of giving children heroin.

Question 35b
As with 35a, this proved to be a very challenging question. Almost all candidates were able to make a basic comment about the difference between the drugs alcohol and heroin, but without further comment, this does little to evaluation the analogy. The best candidates understood that they needed to look at the situation as a whole, rather than just the two substances. A first step towards this was answers that showed that children having a little wine may not be harmful/illegal/addictive, but giving them heroin would always be harmful/illegal/addictive. Only a very small number of candidates spotted the core problem with this analogy: giving children heroin and growing up with wine are very different situations.

Question 36
Well answered by most candidates. The most common incorrect answer was 'peer pressure' which may influence the desire for alcohol but cannot influence the ability to obtain it.

Question 37
As with previous sessions, it remains true that most candidates do not know what a principle is. We had answers that were evidence, sections of the original text or even little arguments. Of those that did give a principle, the idea that the government had a duty of care toward young people was perhaps the most common idea put forward. This skill is very relevant to unit 3 and 4 (and to everyday life) and centres may wish to focus on this important skill.

Question 38 and 39
It was a widely held view amongst the examining team that the answers to these questions were not quite at the same standard as previous sessions. We saw more unstructured arguments that lacked the type of clear structure that we have been looking for. Opinions, rather than considered argument, were more in evidence, perhaps as a result of a topic that teenagers are reputed to be familiar with. Candidates continue to make up far too much evidence that tended to get in the way of their argument, rather than support the reasoning. We also saw a lot of 'slippery slopes' in question 39 and, unfortunately, a great number of rhetorical questions.

Against this, the best answers stood out for the clarity and simplicity of their structure, the ability to bring different strands of reasoning together and the ability to form intermediate conclusions that did more than just summarise the previous reasons.

F493 Resolution of dilemmas

General Comments

The most important general observation is that the same problems tended to occur in all or most of the scripts from a centre rather than being distributed over the whole entry.

Resource Documents
One marker commented that difficulties were produced by not reading the introduction where terms such as 'arms trade' were carefully explained and she suggested that teachers might be advised to emphasize to their students "the importance of reading docs etc VERY carefully".

Use of Documents
Both questions 3 and 4b instructed candidates to support their comments by critical use of the resource documents. More centres did this than on previous occasions, but there were still many candidates who used documents without any critical distancing. In particular, they made frequent use of data from Documents 1 and 2 without giving any hint that these documents were heavily biased. Some even claimed that both documents were neutral because they came from the BBC, although the Background Information explained that they were intended to set out opposite points of view. Teachers are advised to emphasize to their students that they must approach resource documents with suspicion and briefly evaluate them by reference to such credibility criteria as reputation, ability to see, vested interest to misrepresent the truth (or to tell the truth), expertise and neutrality or bias. This is a fundamental skill of Critical Thinking.

One centre appeared to have taught candidates to use a writing frame, whereby each point made was supported by a reference to a resource document, followed by two contrasting comments evaluating the document and concluding with an intermediate conclusion beginning with "Therefore". Use of this writing frame did not prevent the weaker candidates from misunderstanding the documents or making unpersuasive judgments, and there was a tendency to devote more words to the credibility of the documents than to the point being illustrated from them, but overall candidates who made use of this writing frame almost certainly achieved higher marks than they would have done without it.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1a
Most candidates were able to identify an issue from Document 1 and briefly explain it with reference to the document, but only the best achieved the fourth mark for a more developed explanation.

Question 1b
Many candidates failed to grasp the structure of the argument in Document 2, which relies on the distinction between the defence industry and the arms trade, both of which were defined in the Background Information. They thereby lost marks in this question by claiming that the arms trade, rather than the defence industry, is responsible for 345,000 or 1.5 million jobs. However, candidates who observed the distinction were credited – for example, "Document 2 can influence people to support the arms trade as it claims that the defence industry holds 345,000 jobs and many of those jobs would be lost if the arms trade were to be banned."

Question 2a
Several candidates picked on the format of the table (millions of US dollars at 1990 prices) or thought that benefit to the economy referred to taxation only, but most recognised that without an overall figure with which to compare the value of arms exports, it was impossible to estimate the value of the arms trade to the economy.

Question 2b
Some candidates mentioned several problems instead of explaining one. Others said that the problem was that the table referred to exports rather than imports - which presumably meant they had failed to turn the page. The most popular answer (rightly) was that purchase of arms might be for protection or deterrence and indicate fear rather than involvement in conflict.

Question 3
This question differentiated quite well at the bottom of the range. Candidates performed better than in recent exams, when they had been asked to compare two choices by reference to two criteria, which led to a lot of duplication. However, some candidates chose their own criteria or even a different choice in preference to those set by the examiners. Many candidates used resource documents uncritically.

National security was the most difficult criterion, and a wide variety of points was made, some more plausible than others. Some candidates claimed – on the basis of a misreading of Document 2 - that the main purpose of the arms trade was to supply the UK's own troops. Employment and the national economy were quite straightforward criteria, except that many candidates took claims relating to the defence industry from Document 2 and alleged that they referred to the arms trade.

Question 4a
In previous exams, candidates had been asked to frame a dilemma, but in response to a concern that those who did that task badly might disadvantage themselves in part (b), on this occasion they were asked to explain why a stated pair of alternatives constituted a dilemma. One mark was awarded for explaining the nature of a dilemma and three marks for identifying the adverse consequences of each alternative. Most candidates achieved less than three, by being vague or focusing on minor points.

Question 4b
A few centres and candidates discussed the dilemma or the issue without reference to principles and some argued for a particular policy instead of trying to resolve the dilemma. One centre used principles in question 3 instead of question 4. It is surprising that after this specification has been examined several times, candidates from some centres still do not know how to answer the questions. However, most candidates reached a more or less persuasive resolution.

As usual (and rightly), Utilitarianism was the most popular choice for an ethical principle. Some candidates recognised that they needed to compare the benefits to the UK (economy and employment) with the harm done to the victims of war and oppression, but most focused on one or the other and drew positive or negative conclusions respectively. Some candidates appeared to expect Utilitarianism and deontological ethics to lead to contrasting conclusions (as they do in many cases) and they tried to structure their discussion on that basis. In this case, however, either approach could have been used to support either alternative, and good answers demonstrated that.

Many candidates successfully used simple deontological principles, such as that one should not support war or that the Government has a duty to promote the economic well-being of the nation. A few made accurate use of the Categorical Imperative, eg claiming that support for the arms trade uses the victims of war as means to the end of economic profit.

Several candidates appealed to Libertarianism as an ethical principle, but many had a distorted understanding of what it is - eg "Libertarians promote freedom for everyone in simple terms" – and used it as the basis for claiming that Governments should do whatever they like. Similar inferences were drawn from Egoism and Hedonism. It seemed odd to see Egoism identified as an ethical principle and applied as such.

As on previous occasions, some candidates unwisely and unsuccessfully tried to differentiate between Utilitarianism and Consequentialism, Prudentialism or Teleology.

Quite a lot of candidates tried to apply Rawls's theory of the Veil of Ignorance to this dilemma, but some of them had too vague an idea of what it was to make coherent or convincing use of it.

F494/01 & 02 Critical Reasoning

Section A

Multiple Choice

The multiple choice was generally done well and candidates seemed to find the topics and questions generally accessible. There is still, however, a need for improvement in analysis questions, in particular questions in which candidates need to distinguish between main and intermediate conclusions.

Section B

Performance was generally of a similar level to recent sessions, although there were fewer outstanding candidates and fewer extremely weak candidates. Most candidates had been taught to answer critical thinking questions, although there remained a significant minority who answered as if it were an English Language paper. Only a very few candidates were aware that Germaine Greer is a woman. Although this did not affect their marks, it did raise an eyebrow. A significant minority of candidates also referred to the author by her first name, for example, 'Germaine says…' Again, this does not directly affect candidate's marks, but by the time they take the synoptic unit of an advanced level course, candidates ought to be able to use the convention of referring to an author by their surname, for example, 'Greer argues that…'

The further argument question still requires most attention and improvement.   Centres now need to focus on helping candidates to write short, structured and reasoned arguments which question key terms, use strands of reasoning, anticipate and respond to counter argument and above all, have a clear logical structure in which reasons support intermediate and main conclusions.

Q21
Most candidates were able to name two of the three elements, although few were able to satisfactorily explain their function in the structure of the argument.

a)   Many candidates were able to say that this was an example, but most thought it was an example of 'ridiculous proposals,' when in fact it was an example of the way in which graffiti is being treated with 'zero-tolerance.' Several candidates wrote that it was an example of too serious punishment of graffiti, and this was accepted as a reasonable version of what Greer was doing.

b)   Surprisingly few candidates were able to say that this was evidence, and even fewer were able to say that it was used as a counter assertion. Some candidates stated or implied that it was countered or knocked down or responded to by the next sentence, which was accepted.

c)   A reasonable number of candidates were able to say that this was a reason to support the claim that 'we should stop washing graffiti off walls.' Few identified it as an analogy or comparison. A worryingly large minority thought that this was the main conclusion of the piece.

Q22
Almost all candidates performed the right task this session, of breaking down the reasoning into its elements and considering the structure of the argument. A few still attempted to evaluate rather than analysing. It would be nice to see more candidates setting their answers out as:
R
IC
This is clearer than prose answers, and it is easier for markers to be sure that they are giving the right mark to candidates.

Most candidates accurately identified that 'we should stop washing graffiti off walls' was the main conclusion of this paragraph. Some were completely mistaken about this. Others labelled a number of ICs, but gave no indication of which IC supported any other IC, so they did not show that they knew what the author was most strongly trying to persuade them to accept. This meant that they were unable to access marks above Level 2.

Many candidates identified the first sentence as a counter argument, and the second sentence as a response to the counter argument. This was certainly an acceptable understanding of how the argument works, but the majority of candidates did not break these two elements down. Each of these consisted of a reason and an intermediate conclusion. Candidates need to be aware that a single sentence can contain two or more elements of argument, and really consider the logical structure of them, rather than following the order of the passage.

More candidates were able to show some understanding of the structure of the argument by accurate use of 'support' or a diagram to show the structure of support. Of those who used diagrams, more used them accurately than in previous sessions. There remain, however, centres where candidates do the oddest things in their diagrams.

Q23
This question was well done. The best answers were truly focussed on the extent to which a particular weakness affected the overall strength of support for the claim, 'we should stop washing graffiti off walls,' and provided an overall assessment of the strength of support for this claim, which followed from their reasoning and took into consideration the strength of the claim and therefore how much support it needed and the relative strengths and weakness of the argument. For example, strong candidates wrote answers such as,

> 'Greer restricts the options to keeping all graffiti or washing it all off, ignoring the possibility that we might keep works of artistic, political or historical merit and get rid of the obscenities on people's property. This is quite a significant weakness in her argument because one of her main strands of reasoning is that we should keep graffiti because some of it is art and some of 'it is a once-in-a-lifetime coincidence of work, place and space.' But she has only shown that *some* graffiti is worth keeping. The other two main reasons to support her claim are that it costs a lot of money to wash graffiti off, and that washing it off is bad for the environment. The restriction of the options does not weaken these two lines of reasoning.

On the face of it, the cost of removing graffiti would seem to be a strong reason to support her claim that we should not do so. However, Greer does assume that it is worth putting up with all the naff graffiti in order to get the odd brilliant one, and she assumes that people are unwilling to pay such a large sum to clean up graffiti. It is possible to challenge both of these assumptions, by showing that people do not think it is worth putting up with naff graffiti, and that they are willing to pay to have obscenities removed. This would significantly weaken the grounds for saying that we shouldn't wash graffiti off the walls on the basis that it is expensive.

Again, the environmental reasons for not washing graffiti off the walls seem quite strong, even though Greer has clearly exaggerated and used rhetorical language. However, she has again restricted the options to keeping graffiti or washing it off. It may be possible to paint over it, or

sandblast it (as she mentions in paragraph 7), so this reasoning is less convincing that it first seems. Of course, painting over the graffiti would be one way of not washing it off, but that is clearly not what Greer means, as her argument is about keeping graffiti.

The other line of reasoning that Greer uses is to show that our current zero-tolerance reactions to graffiti are ridiculous and over the top. She does show that there are some extreme measures and punishments in place for dealing with graffiti artists, although this is weakened by her assumption that you should not be punished for your crime just because you haven't done another one. However, showing that using low-flying planes is over the top doesn't show that we should stop washing graffiti off the walls.

So, overall, Greer's reasoning does provide some support for her claim that we should stop washing graffiti off the walls. There are financial and environmental reasons for reconsidering this, and it would certainly be worth considering political and artistic merit of individual graffiti. But her claim is quite strong, leaving no room for subtlety, and the weaknesses in her reasoning mean that it is not fully supported.'

Weaker and more average candidates, however, tended to work through the passage making comments such as, 'Greer over generalises when she says that most art is feeble and bad. This weakens the argument.' These candidates need to consider *how* and *why, in what way* and *to what extent* this weakens the argument, with specific reference to the support for the claim that we should stop washing graffiti off the walls. They might also like to consider whether it is an over generalisation to say that, 'most art is feeble and bad.' Similarly, they should consider whether it is an over generalisation to say that nearly all graffiti is just annoying. They should also consider whether to make the generalisation point at all, given that the much more interesting issue is the way in which Greer is defining art.

Q24
This question tests AO3, Development of Reasoning. The most important thing that candidates need to do is use reasons which support their intermediate conclusions and the main conclusion they have been given.

This is an area in which able candidates, in particular, could improve. There are too many rhetorical speeches, rambles, interesting discourses on a theme, expressions of opinion etc. These may be perceptive but they often lack structure and do not have strong links of support between reasons and intermediate conclusion. This means that they do not access the highest marks and occasionally cannot even access middling marks.

At the other extreme, there is some evidence that candidates are being given tick lists of elements to include in their argument and working on the basis that including these elements will suffice to gain a good mark. It is true that good candidates tend to define their terms, anticipate and respond to counter argument and use strands of reasoning. However, where these are 'empty', ticking the boxes is not sufficient. An anticipated counter argument must be apposite, and a response to this counter argument should actually respond to it and give us a reason not to accept the counter argument. Strands of reasoning must be driven by logical support rather than simply listing different opinions relating to educational needs or educational deserts in the same paragraph.

Most candidates produced an answer to the question, but very few produced a strong answer. Most wrote a defence of or attack on teaching art in schools. Most conflated 'more funding' with 'funding for more art.' Some misread the question and wrote about funding for art schools. Candidates generally overstated, 'Teaching art will help young people develop their personalities and make the most of their lives.' This is a very strong claim. So is, 'Teaching art is a waste of taxpayers' money.'

More subtle answers considered whether the benefits that might be gained by providing funding for more art in the form of visuals in school, better resources for e.g. silk printing, drama, music and visits to galleries were worth the price – which might be the opportunity cost. Most talked about the need for more maths and science in school – some considered that it might be better to fund more PE in schools, as it also provided teamwork skills and healthy exercise.

Candidates demonstrated very polarised and rigid views, with many of them unable to consider that education might be about more than gaining grades in order to earn more money in later life. Few of those opposing funding for more art, for example, considered that this would not mean forcing everyone to take GCSE art. There was little understanding of the possible benefits of a quiet, contemplative activity which was not assessed. This was felt to be rather a shame in itself – but the key point for our purposes is that candidates ought to be demonstrating a little subtlety in their reasoning by the end of an advanced level thinking course.

Quality of Written Communication

Most candidates were able to write in clear, coherent English and communicate their thoughts and reasoning with reasonable clarity, although some showed some immaturity and one or two were barely coherent. Most were able to use technical terms such as names of argument elements, names of flaws, assumptions etc with some accuracy.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Critical Thinking (H050/H450)
January 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F491	Raw	80	52	43	35	27	19	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F492	Raw	120	73	65	57	49	42	0
	UMS	180	144	126	108	90	72	0
F493	Raw	80	54	47	41	35	29	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F494	Raw	110	82	74	66	58	50	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	12.7	30.9	54.2	74.5	89.0	100	1212
H450	15.8	42.1	68.4	100	100	100	22

1234 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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