OCR

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCE

Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE **A2 H452**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H052**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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Advanced GCE Critical Thinking (H452)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Critical Thinking (H052)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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F501 Introduction to Critical Thinking

General Comments:

In June 2015 F501 evidenced a wide performance range, with a significant number accessing above 60 marks and the majority within striking distance of 30 marks. Candidates responded strongly to the following questions, displaying their skills to the best advantage:

- Q3 assessing representativeness
- Q4(b)(ii) alternative explanation
- Q6 weakness in the support that the reasoning gives to the conclusion
- Q7 assessing credibility of a document
- Q9 assessing credibility of a source.

It was the analysis questions that tended to challenge candidates' skills the most, especially Q1(c) identifying and explaining examples; Q1 (d) identifying indicator words; Q2 identifying and explaining argument elements, and Q4 (a) stating the assumption. The strongest answers involving analysis were found in Q1 (a) identifying a supporting reason to the main conclusion and Q1 (b) identifying counter assertion.

A widespread use of specialist terms was in evidence in the stronger answers, especially in Section B, where the use of credibility criteria is central to the assessment required. These helped candidates to be successful in Q7 and in Q9 above. Using a 'lack of' or 'no', relating to such things as 'expertise' or 'ability see' was almost always difficult to justify, as was reference to 'reputation', as the context did not supply this information. Rogue criteria such as 'reliability', 'authority' and 'use of objective materials' crept into some answers preventing access to potential marks. In Section A, answers to Q1(c) and (d) suggested that example and indicator words were specialist terms that needed development.

Time management was well executed with most candidates reaching Q10 with sufficient time to present a full bodied reasoned case, often with a plan to tackle this. The minority that had a curtailed Q10 were often those who had many extended answers on the continuation sheets. Candidates need to be guided by the spaces available after each question as to the length of the answer required, as in the one line for Q1 (c) example, where some candidates copied out large portions of the text.

Additional material on continuation sheets was clearly labelled with the question numbers, which helped to ensure that extra material could be readily recognised and credited where appropriate.

Candidates usually began their written answers with very legible handwriting. As the paper progressed this often became less legible as the pace increased, such that Q10 was often difficult to decipher. Where meaning can turn upon one word, it is important that that word can be read, so candidates should be urged to keep their answers legible throughout the paper, or use the dispensation to use a computer where appropriate.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.1

(a) Many correctly identified the conclusion. Others included additional material and a few paraphrased 'one another' as 'each other'.

(b) More correctly identified the counter-assertion and of these a number included additional material, usually 'Before UK voters e-mail to complain about their road being closed'. The weakest answers stopped after the latter.

(c) Those who chose the correct examples tended to complete what was being exemplified in the right way. Weaker answers included too much material in the example such as 'Other countries including the USA, Australia and New Zealand' and then repeated part of this in the explanation. The weakest answers identified evidence in the form of the Department of Health figures, the General Household Survey or the ICM poll.

(d) Answers frequently linked 'so' to a conclusion, less frequently 'because' to a reason and rarely 'amongst other things' to an example.

Question No.2

The answers were split almost evenly between those who correctly recognised the text as not being a conclusion and those who did not. The former tended to gain the second mark for saying that there were no supporting reasons, but far fewer moved on to Safe Speed's second sentence to reference that this was not a supporting reason. The weakest answers attempted a definition, some incorrectly claiming that a conclusion 'sums up an argument'. Some attempted to treat Document 2 as a whole, claiming that this was a reason to support the first sentence, 'The idea has not proved a hit with everyone.'

Totally incorrect answers focused upon the persuasive nature of the claim, the use of 'need', or the alleged support given by the second sentence.

Question No.3

Strong answers recognised the need to find a contrasting factor and explain how that affected public response. Weaker answers simply identified a contrasting factor such as London was a 'busier' or 'larger' city. The weakest went very little beyond they have 'different' populations or 'different' weather without explaining this difference. The impact of the contrasting factor upon public response was often left up in the air in weaker answers, as they stopped short of this further step.

Question No.4

(a) Many gained two marks for an imprecise or overstated response. Others restated the claim and gained no marks.
(b)(i) Many more gained 3 marks, appreciating that it was a good thing for children to play near their home was being assumed. Those who focused on the quality of the survey gained a partial performance mark.
(ii) Most gained 2 marks, largely based on the idea of increased technological items which you play within the home. Weaker answers made a statement that was unrelated to change, such as 'Children like to play on their X boxes.'

Question No.5

Strong answers kept to one argument element and included a comparison. Some stated a benefit without a comparator such as 'children meet their neighbours' and gained two marks. Quite a number added extra argument elements, often including two or more reasons or several examples, gaining 1 mark. The weakest answers gave a benefit that would apply both to the playground and the street such as 'They gain the opportunity to play in the fresh air.'

Question No.6

There were a number of strong answers, even where candidates had not performed strongly elsewhere, perhaps because there were two elements in the conclusion which could be used - 'benefits' of open streets and holding them on a Sunday. Candidates took a number of approaches, the most popular being a generalisation, whilst others questioned the benefits, occasionally posing a vitriolic condemnation of 'drunken parents' letting 'hyperactive children run wild'. Lack of reference to the text was the recurring feature of weaker answers.

Question No.7

Many good answers were based on the idea of vested interest to exaggerate the benefits or to be selective to support their campaign to gain more followers, or in the case of the shop keeper to increase their income. The weakest answers attempted to use 'no expertise' or 'no ability to see', with little success, as within such a group there probably would be people in various relevant fields. Reputation was very difficult to justify and was best avoided. Answers that assessed the individual within the document, here the Director, instead of the document itself, restricted the marks available to 1.

Question No.8

Most gained 2 marks. Some omitted the source and gained 1 mark. Very few identified other parts of the text.

Question No.9

(a) The strongest answers assessed the claim made by Streeplaylondon as required by the question and went on to suggest what else you needed to know to make the assessment, albeit often with circular reasoning. The strongest appreciated that the latter required what they needed to know to support their assessment relating to the credibility criteria chosen, not 'what else I need to know' in general terms. So, had they chosen 'ability to see', the latter would refer to how widely they might have seen the 'key contributor to neighbourhood relations'.

Weaker answers referred generically to the claim mentioning at best 'benefits', or more weakly the 'project' or 'scheme' itself, thus restricting their potential marks. The weakest focused upon any element in the paragraph, often 'lottery funded' or creating 'a hundred street-play events across London', restricting access to potential marks. Most gained the mark for making a judgement and made a reasoned attempt to support this.

As with question 7, reputation was difficult to justify other than a presumed reputation because Steetplaylondon had been chosen for lottery funding. Lack of expertise and lack of ability to see were rarely justified successfully.

(b)   Strong answers made it clear which credibility criteria they regarded as the most important and why. The strongest answers went on to consider another credibility criterion used, assessing why this was less important. Many restricted their potential marks by not explaining such as why the claim made was weakened by vested interest or strengthened by ability to see.

Question No.10

Candidates engaged with the topic to produce full bodied answers, which were well structured, the majority making full use of credibility criteria to make assessments. Rogue criteria such as 'authority' or 'use of objective sources' occasionally crept in. Weaker answers tried to justify the credibility of an individual by merely saying he has 'expertise' or 'a vested interest' without explaining why, thus not gaining marks. Again using 'no expertise' and 'no ability to see' were either unjustified or incorrect. Further attempts to use 'reputation' were often difficult to justify as the reputation of many sources were unknown. Those assessments phrased as a vested interest to represent claims accurately to protect professionalism were more successful.

With regard to plausibility, the strongest answers integrated one or two ideas of their own, over and above what was in the text. Weaker answers simply repeated ideas in the text, often at length with several quotations.

Most answers came to a judgement, the strongest drawn from the previous credibility and plausibility assessments. Candidates were almost divided equally between Sunday open streets having a positive or negative impact, both gaining credit.

F502 Assessing and Developing Argument

General Comments:

This proved to be a relatively hard paper. Though the schools-related topic ties in well with candidates' experience, and they weren't short of ideas and opinions in Section C, the particular topic of *making* students repeat a school year is most relevant to the compulsory years of schooling. The introduction to the resource book referred to "children" which implies those under 16 in primary school or secondary school. Given most candidates for an AS paper will be in year 12, some, particularly in question 22, focused too much on their own situation and the question of being *allowed* to resit a year or an exam.

This paper was marked more strictly in a number of areas, and so the raw marks were considerably lower than the UMS marks. There are three areas in particular where a little preparation and advice could have easily raised the grades of many candidates (see remarks on Q21a, 23 and 24 below for these "low-hanging fruit").

There were fewer "No Responses" and few doodles. This suggests that candidates understood what they were being asked to do and that the time allocation was right. There were no signs of candidates not having time to finish.

Candidates overall seem to have become a little more adept at using a variety of argument elements and using appropriate language to express themselves.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: the Multiple Choice Questions

Most of these questions discriminated well, but the overall average score was lower than last year.

Given that section A accounts for 20% of the marks on this paper, candidates should allow about 18 of the 90 minutes, which they should spend thinking, comparing, eliminating wrong answers, identifying key words etc.

Question No.

1 D was a popular distractor

2 Proved to be the easiest question

3 B was a popular distractor

4 C was chosen more often than the correct answer (D)

5 Proved to be the hardest question; even the best candidates did not do well. C was correct but most chose A

6 Discriminated well

7 B was a popular distractor
8 D proved more popular that the correct answer (C)

9

10   Discriminated well. C was popular distractor

11   B proved more popular than the correct answer (A)

12

13   A proved a lot more popular than the correct answer (B)

14   D proved more popular than the correct answer (B)

15

16   Though marked strictly ("school" instead of "schools" was not credited) this was still the easiest mark on the paper. Though only 1 mark, candidates who selected the wrong text here often gave the answer to this question in **17a** instead, thereby losing a further 2 marks.

17   There were big contrasts between the sections. **17a** was the hardest question on the paper, with all the zero mark examples in the MS appearing quite frequently. Candidates mistook reasons supported only by evidence ("Both the general public and students…." supported by the evidence of the Sunday Times survey) for Intermediate Conclusions. **17b** was quite well done. **17d** was the most straightforward question after **Q16.** Candidates should use techniques such as the "therefore" test, and applying principles in different contexts to understand the structure of the passage, and ensure they have selected the correct claim.

18   **and 19**   Both these questions specifically asked candidates to "explain the impact of the weakness on the author's reasoning" Too many candidates thought it was sufficient to say "This weakens the author's argument/reasoning". That clearly is not enough. It can be improved in two ways; one is to refer to the author's conclusion which is not supported, but better still is to use appropriate terms such as those in the MS (pages14and16) such as "sufficiency, relevance, selectivity, necessity, adequacy etc".

In both of these questions there were 6 or more weaknesses from which candidates needed to find 2, yet many still resorted to questioning the evidence rather than evaluating its use with comments such as "1715 is too few in the sample" or "the Sunday Times is biased".

Many candidates are still writing "The author *assumes* ….[e.g.] 'the teacher will inevitably fail'" when what they mean is that the author *claims* 'the teacher will inevitably fail'. A quote from the resource book cannot logically be *unstated* which is what the word "assumption" refers to in this specification. Such responses typically went on to offer a simplistic retort "but this is not the case", or a counter "but teachers have been trained to do this".

Better answers followed the "what…….so……. why this is a problem"   rather than a "what….whereas" approach.

20   The flaw needs to be the one committed by the author, (straw man) not the flaw which the author appears to be accusing his opponents of committing such as restricting the options or choosing extreme untypical examples. Though the question did not this time use the words "with reference to the text" the instruction in **20b** to "explain clearly the impact on the

author's reasoning" cannot be done without reference to the text, and purely generic definitions of straw man were limited to one mark.

21a The MS gives 6 points of comparison, of which candidates only had to find 3 to get full marks. That however, did not make this an easy question. Some of the points were implicit [e.g schools or teachers, who correspond to the farmers, were not stated]. The comparison had to be *explicit,* and only a small minority of answers bore any resemblance to the format in the MS. Most candidates limited themselves to answers of the type "treating everyone who was born in the same academic year as if they were the same *is being compared with* asking farmers to harvest all of their strawberries on the same day *with* some unripe and some starting to rot". Such answers gained no credit.

A few lost marks by needlessly changing the words in the analogy: "pick" instead of "harvest" for example. And yet even with candidates who gained no marks, it was often clear from their responses to the next question that they realised that strawberries represented students, and unripe represented those who had underachieved etc. ***Studying the mark scheme here could easily raise candidates' scores by a grade in future.***

21b To gain credit, candidates needed to go beyond stating the obvious "strawberries are different from students". A few even appeared to believe that strawberries are inanimate objects.

Candidates should consider
- Are the parallels similar in the way they are assumed or implied to be?
- Are the properties of the parallels relevant enough to be supportive of the conclusion of the argument that analogy is attempting to support. E.g. in this case, is the grouping or progression of students sufficiently similar to the harvesting of strawberries?
- Are the dissimilarities between the parallels to significant for the analogy to work?

22 and 24 General points
In both these questions candidates were allowed to support or challenge the claim. When it comes to the main conclusion these are significantly different tasks. Support means they merely have to quote the given claim, but it is made harder by the fact that the quoting has to be exact. Changing "never" to "not" in question 22, or use of passive tense "students should never be made..." rendered the MC "weak". If they oppose, they have the harder task of generating their own conclusion, but to compensate, a wider range of conclusions were allowed.

The quality of answers is reduced by replacing argument with rhetorical questions, or attempting to support reasons with manufactured evidence.

The space provided, 16 lines, is a guide to the length of answer expected from a candidate with average-sized handwriting. Much shorter answers are unlikely to be "developed" though could still gain 11 of the 12 marks. Much longer answers are unlikely to be seen as having a clear structure and certainly won't be seen as "concise", so they too may be limited to 10 marks. Some candidates ask for an extra booklet when they have left the extra pages 14-16 blank. Whilst this has no effect on the marks, but it is somewhat wasteful of time and paper.

22 As mentioned above, a major weakness seen quite often was candidates who argued for *allowing* students to repeat a year. Strong reasons and main conclusion were fairly common; strong intermediate conclusions and structure & development were rarer.

Attempts at intermediate conclusions were often:
- Summaries of preceding reasons and evidence
- A statement of the main conclusion slightly adapted
- A consequential or explanatory clause.

In the past, the corresponding question has often asked for a counter-argument and response (with the requirement for an intermediate conclusion coming in the final question). This year, these requirements were swapped round, as it was thought candidates would find it easier to produce an intermediate conclusion on this topic. However, many seemed to be making more effort to produce a counter-argument and response than to produce an intermediate conclusion, leading to the suspicion that they may not have all read the question.

The specification (3.2.3 page 16) requires candidates to be able to produce a range of argument elements:-
- Intermediate conclusion
- Use of evidence or examples
- Counter-argument
- Hypothetical reasoning
- General principles

Any of these could be required in future in any of the questions in section C.

23   In the claim "car insurance should cost the same for *everybody*" the use of the word "everybody" implies irrespective of age, gender, previous claims record, power and value of car etc. Given the nature of the candidates and the contents of the resource book, many candidates limited their answers to age or gender. Answers to do with equality and discrimination were suitably general and often seen; the point that applying for insurance would be much simpler was also general but rarely seen. Reasons why car insurance should be *cheaper*, missed the point. Some reasons were overstated and untrue "everyone is equally likely to have an accident", whereas it is true to say that we cannot know for certain that a member of a particular group will have an accident.

    A major mistake which, since it often occurred 3 times could end up costing a candidate a whole grade, and which is so easily avoided, is adding an extra element, often quite blatantly with the use of link words "as", "because", "so" etc. This was common even on otherwise good scripts, which reduced the discrimination of this question.

24   Almost all candidates attempted a counter argument and response, but to be strong, it does need to be a counter-*argument,* not merely a counter-assertion, and the response needs to be relevant. This is still proving hard for many to achieve, even though the basic structure is easy enough; "Some say that............ because......... However............" ***This is the third relatively straightforward way in which many candidates could improve grades in future.***

    When arguing that friendship is *more* important than achievement, reasoning is not "strong" unless a comparison of the two is made. Just saying why friendship is important or achievement is not is insufficient.

F503 Ethical Reasoning & Decision-making

General Comments:

Virtually all candidates seemed to engage well with the topic, and there was no evidence of anyone degenerating into a rant because of an emotional response.

Questions 2, 3 and 4 all focused on choices to be made by "the management of Aintree Racecourse" (a commercial company). A few candidates lost marks by focusing on the government instead of the company, *eg* by discussing the choice that the Grand National should be made illegal.

The handwriting of some candidates presented serious problems of intelligibility. Although examiners devoted excessive time and effort into trying to make sense of such scripts, they were regretfully aware that some apparent incoherence may have been due to their failure to decipher what the candidate had intended to say. Candidates who cannot write legibly under exam conditions are strongly recommended to apply for permission to write their answers on a computer.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1 There were many valid points that could be made, and the way to achieve full marks was to make several of them. No one was expected to say everything that could be said. All candidates succeeded in making at least one or two valid points, and most performed significantly better than that. The most popular answers were also the important points, namely the number and constitution of the samples and the wording of the questions and answers. The nature of the website poll (self-selecting, with the possibility of responding more than once) was also significant, but few candidates commented on it.

2 Most candidates, but by no means all, showed that they knew the definition of a dilemma and succeeded in applying it to the case of the Grand National. The most popular judgment was that there were only two options, each of which had significant disadvantages, and that the choice therefore was a dilemma: these answers were awarded 4 marks out of 6, except that candidates who interpreted the disadvantages of continuing only in terms of public opinion, rather than animal welfare, received only 3 marks. Candidates who recognized that compromise policies were available (making the race safer in various ways) were able to achieve 5 or 6 marks out of 6, either by explaining that the existence of these compromises meant the situation was not a dilemma or by claiming that they did not resolve the problem of danger to the horses.

3 Nearly all candidates used profitability as one of their criteria. Some discussions were too trivial or speculative to achieve more than 1 mark, and some focused on the profit to bookmakers instead of the Racecourse, but most candidates drew on the resource documents to give more detailed answers. Other popular criteria included animal safety, public opinion, tradition and effectiveness. Effectiveness, although many candidates who used this forgot that it was effectiveness in responding to the criticisms of the event that they were supposed to be assessing, concentrating instead on something like effectiveness in terms of animal welfare, resulting in marginal or weak responses. Most discussions of public opinion made appropriate use of the resource documents, but some were too trivial or speculative to be awarded more than 1 mark, even if they recognized

ambiguity. Candidates who chose ease of implementation as a criterion tended to find it difficult to apply to this case.
A few candidates appeared not to understand the concept of a criterion, treating them as arguments in favour of their chosen option rather than standards by which it could be assessed. A few also used criteria to survey the issue, instead of assessing a specific choice. Inevitably, candidates who undertake a different task from the one specified lose marks.

By the nature of the issue being discussed, much of the evaluation was fairly obvious. Not many candidates attempted to evaluate the criteria they were using, although that was a way of increasing the mark. For example, a few candidates pertinently pointed out that – as a commercial company, the aim of which is to make profit – profitability is a very important criterion for the management of the racecourse to apply to the question.

4   Nearly all candidates took the right approach to this question, using inferential reasoning and dividing their answers into self-contained paragraphs, many of which ended with summative intermediate conclusions. Inevitably, candidates varied in how successfully they accomplished this task, but almost everyone understood what the task was. There were some cases of impressive inferential reasoning.

A few candidates presented arguments in favour of their chosen position – some of them quite eloquently - without attempting to make use of principles, which seriously limited the marks they could achieve. Many others mentioned one or more principles, but applied no more than one of them correctly, which had implications for their whole mark for question 4, since marks for other parts of that question are restricted for candidates who achieve level 0 or 1 for the use of principles.

Most candidates now realize that it is better to apply three or four contrasting principles in some detail than to assemble a series of moral principles and theories and apply them all superficially, as if they could be combined or were of equal validity. Egoism is particularly unsuitable for the latter approach, since (in addition to being difficult to apply to most moral issues) it is intrinsically intolerant of other moral principles. The least persuasive ethical principle, used by one candidate, was "the principle of greed".

An important issue in relation to this topic is the moral status of animals, in this case specifically horses. Good answers argued for the inclusion or exclusion of horses in moral evaluation, while weaker answers assumed or stipulated that the interests of the horses should or should not be included.

Several free-standing moral principles were used by some candidates, but some of them begged the question: for example, the principle "It is wrong to use animals for entertainment" does support the judgment that the Grand National should be stopped, but that support is very weak unless some reasons are given for accepting the principle.

Some candidates who used Utilitarianism as a principle were aware that the calculation of pleasure and pain includes animals, but others apparently did not know that. Many candidates used a narrow version of "the greatest good of the greatest number", to refer to numbers only, rather than including the other dimensions of Bentham's Hedonic Calculus, which reduced both the usefulness of their answers and consequently their marks; the weakest discussions treated the calculation as identical to public opinion. Candidates who had understood the differences between Act and Rule Utilitarianism, were able to develop their answers appropriately but many used those words, as well as Prudentialism, without really understanding them and those points had to be disregarded and could detract from their overall marks if used incorrectly. A few candidates did understand Preference Utilitarianism and applied it well to this issue.

Several candidates used as one of their principles "Deontological ethics: that you should do the right thing regardless of the consequences." Most of them, however, then either asserted that the choice for which they were arguing was the right thing, without supporting their claim by any reasoning, or justified it by reference to consequences. This reasoning was quite weak. The principle that one should do the right thing is highly vulnerable to circularity.

Most candidates who used Kant's principle of Universalization argued that closing the Grand National would imply that all horse races should be closed, which ignored the special conditions of the Grand National. This reasoning did not rest on the underlying point of the Principle of Universalization, namely that one should not make exceptions for oneself. Candidates who made use of Kant's principle of not using persons as means only could be divided into three classes: some assumed that this included horses, not knowing that Kant would have disagreed; some better answers stipulated that they would extend the principle to horses; and the best answers argued for such an extension. As on previous occasions, most candidates who appealed to this principle over-stated it, by omitting the significant limitation "only", which misled some of them into making implausible arguments and judgments.

Several candidates made use of Rawls's Veil of Ignorance approach, but it tended not to shed much light on the issue unless they could bring themselves to consider the possibility that they might have been born a horse.

Several candidates made good use of Ross's *prima-facie* duties, especially the duty of non-maleficence.

There was some good use of Divine Command ethics, based on not only the Jewish/ Christian concept of stewardship, but also Buddhist ethics. Candidates who applied Natural Law to the issue tended to find it quite difficult to do so convincingly; several candidates alleged that the danger to horses in the Grand National contravened the principle of the survival of the species, although the opposite claim could more plausibly be argued.

Many candidates made good use of the resource documents, and there was some good, balanced evaluation, *eg* recognizing both expertise and vested interest on the part of the proprietors of Aintree Racecourse. Not many candidates considered that the Liverpool Daily Post might have a vested interest or bias towards an event which is so significant in the culture and economy of Liverpool. Judging from some comments about Doc 3, it appears that the Daily Mail may be notorious for unreliability amongst teenagers.

Most candidates considered an alternative choice, while some considered more than one, and the better responses included some developed discussion as to why they were dismissing the alternatives. The debate seemed to be between choosing what most people would be happy with and taking a strong view about animal exploitation. Perhaps the strongest candidates were those who considered that the two were incompatible.

F504 Critical Reasoning

General Comments:

This year's exam tackled the topic of robots and the emergence of AI technology and its possible impact on society. The subject appeared to engage candidates, some of whom responded with excellent answers.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.1

This question proved to be challenging, but almost all candidates managed to identify some argument elements. Problems arose when candidates failed to refer to the text.

1a: This was straightforward for most candidates.

1b: Some candidates fell into the trap of failing to discriminate between a counter assertion and a counter argument or a counter-claim.

1c: This challenged the majority of candidates who claimed it was a reason rather than a intermediate conclusion and struggled to identify what it was linked to in the text.

Question No.2

This was a longer passage than in previous years and therefore daunting to many candidates. Possibly because of the extra length, experience with past papers led a majority of candidates to declare that the passage either was/was not an argument. Most candidates could not see beyond this contradiction. Therefore, answers that it was a combination of argument with commentary and explanation were only provided by the best (ie Level 4) candidates.

However, there were almost as many Level 4 answers for this question as in earlier years, so this does not seem to be a problem. As one examiner put it : " The best candidates realised that the two possible conclusions were almost interchangeable and that the last two paragraphs led on from the argument but were not part of it. Weaker candidates spent a lot of time enumerating various examples without realising that many of them were part of the contextualisation rather than the argument itself."

Question No.3

This question was more broadly based than in previous papers and presented candidates with a challenging task given the time allowed: however, whether this was a more challenging task than earlier papers offered is arguable.

Most candidates honed in on the graph: many stating that it was a significant piece of evidence to the detriment of noting other key strengths/weaknesses in the passage. Very few were able to recognise any strengths in the graph (ie that the industrial revolution in general and steam engine in particular did significantly alter the social development of the age) . Most candidates hedged around the weaknesses in the graph without identifying that the Social Development Index itself was wholly specious.

Weaker responses focused on marginal weaknesses such as that the author had not shown how his examples would lead to a 'near perfect world'. Many candidates realised that the author made a lot of assumptions but fewer were able to pinpoint the two key weaknesses (see mark scheme) . A few weaker candidates focused on credibility criteria from the AS specification to evaluate the author or his sources (most of them giving him credit for objectivity when in fact he is the originator of the McAfee security system and far from an objective observer of the future of technology).

One notable weakness was the failure of many candidates to address the question of definitions in the author's claim: only the better candidates realised the significance of the word 'dramatically' .

Question No.4

Question 4 extended the task required compared to previous papers. Some candidates found it difficult to structure two sides of an argument into one fluent essay: however, those who found this especially difficult were not penalised. For example, many candidates put forward first one side of the argument and then the other side, incurring some repetition. Stronger responses integrated points for and against in a developed discussion using counter arguments and responses consistently to build a nuanced argument.

One examiner put it thus: "it was those candidates who chose to synthesise the two sides of the question that gained the highest marks and produced essays which were a pleasure to read."

Better candidates attempted to define the terms of the statement which helped clarify their argument. There was some reference to the other documents in the resource booklet by some candidates: weaker candidates restricted themselves to the examples given only by the texts in the resource booklet and such candidates were capped.

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