Examiners' Report January 2009

GCE General Studies (8GS01)

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General

There was a wide spread of marks in all three sections of this paper. In section B, all questions produced a range of answers gaining from zero to maximum marks, apart from Q29 where many answers scored poorly. In section C about 5% of candidates did not present answers to one or both of questions 30 and 31. The suggestions in the rubric about how much time candidates should spend on each section reflect the marks available in each section. Section C contributes 40 out of the 90 marks for the whole paper. Also, 14 of the available marks in sections B and C combined are for Quality of Written Communication. Where candidates communicated poorly, they lost a significant number of marks, often when poor spelling, grammar or punctuation impeded understanding.

Section A – Multiple Choice Questions

1   53% of candidates correctly identified B as the answer.

2   75% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

3   35% of candidates correctly identified D as the answer.

4   82% of candidates correctly identified D as the answer.

5   19% of candidates correctly identified D as the answer.

6   91% of candidates correctly identified A as the answer.

7   73% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

8   59% of candidates correctly identified D as the answer.

9   85% of candidates correctly identified A as the answer.

10   34% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

11   85% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

12   26% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

13   96% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

14   60% of candidates correctly identified A as the answer.

15   93% of candidates correctly identified D as the answer.

16   22% of candidates correctly identified B as the answer.

17   92% of candidates correctly identified B as the answer.

18   32% of candidates correctly identified D as the answer.

19   91% of candidates correctly identified A as the answer.

20   61% of candidates correctly identified C as the answer.

Overall, 63% of answers to multiple choice questions were correct.

Section B – Data Response Questions

21   The great majority of answers correctly identified either ease of comparison as an advantage or loss of precision as a disadvantage. General comments about charts presenting data visually were not credited, nor were comments about charts being "easy to misread" or being "drawn inaccurately". Many answers gained two marks by correctly identifying an advantage and a disadvantage.

22   Almost all candidates correctly identified theft from a vehicle as the crime category where DNA profiling had the greatest effect on the detection rate.

23   Almost all candidates correctly identified theft of a vehicle as the crime category where DNA profiling had the smallest effect on the detection rate.

24   Many candidates correctly gave 200 as the number of cars stolen. Candidates who achieved lower marks overall often failed to score any marks on this question, frequently giving "4.5 cars" as the answer. This answer is arrived at by calculating 15% of 30. A simple comparison with the information presented in the question should clearly show that this answer cannot be correct.

25   Almost all candidates gave at least one factor which might limit the validity of the figures in the table. Many candidates correctly identified two or three factors. Some incorrect answers suggested that the time period the figures referred to was not known, or repeated the statement about trends over time which appears in the stem of the question. Other incorrect answers included the suggestion that the percentages had been rounded, reference to unreported cases, and that the figures must be wrong because "the percentages do not add up to 100%".

26   Most candidates identified two or more potential benefits associated with the use of DNA profiling in crime detection, and many were able to correctly identify three or four benefits. Two marks for increased detection rate and increased deterrence were only awarded where these points were presented separately in the answer. References to the use of DNA profiling even when samples have been contaminated were relatively common, but were not credited because this is not a benefit of DNA profiling but a condition for its use in some cases.

27   Many candidates identified two or more of the possible disadvantages of the use of DNA profiling, most commonly the possible difficulties arising from familial searching, the retention of samples from innocent suspects, or possible misuse of profiles in the future. In order to gain maximum marks, candidates had to expand on at least one of these problems in a way which did not simply repeat text from the passage. This was often done well in the case of familial searching, with many answers offering good illustrations of the possible problems which might arise. A very small number of candidates were able to expand on the difficulties linked to the use of data by expert witnesses, which have featured in several high profile cases in recent years.

28   Most candidates gained two marks for correctly referring to the fact that a suspect has to be arrested and that the arrest has to be in connection with a recordable offence for the police to take a DNA sample.

29   Many candidates gained very few marks for this question. The questions rubric advised candidates that they should not give their own opinions but should "...evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence...used by the writer". Answers which selected particular pieces of evidence and identified them as fact or opinion were able to achieve good marks. For example, the data presented in the

table is factual and should be identified as strong evidence. However, the suggestion that "...the benefits far outweigh any disadvantages.." is weaker as evidence because it is an opinion. Many answers which focused on identifying arguments for or against the conclusion, rather than the strength of the evidence, also scored few marks.

Section C – Short Essays

30   This question asked candidates to consider the benefits and difficulties of a personal carbon allowance. Many candidates were able to present a number of relevant arguments, often about the difficulties of implementing, monitoring and enforcing such a system. Another set of common arguments related to the fairness or unfairness of personal carbon allowances, given that individuals may have very different needs. A few candidates seemed to misunderstand the question, arguing that any allowance should simply reflect an individual's current consumption. Some candidates gained high marks by considering some of the possible beneficial changes in lifestyle, for example reduction in car use leading to better public transport and improved health. Candidates were able to achieve the highest marks where they presented a range of arguments supported by relevant evidence.

31   This question asked candidates to consider our treatment of animals, specifically pets and farm animals. Many candidates presented a range of relevant arguments, for example relating our treatment of farm animals to how much we are willing to pay for food. Arguments relating to our treatment of pets were often supported by evidence such as the existence of institutions such as the PDSA and the recent campaign on animal welfare by the RSPCA. Some candidates achieved high marks by arguing that much of the evidence can be interpreted in different ways. For example, the RSPCA is funded by charitable donations suggesting that those people who donate are concerned with animal welfare. However, as some candidates suggested, the very existence of the RSPCA could be interpreted as showing that there are people for whom animal welfare is not important, even in relation to their own companion animals. Candidates who were able to include some consideration of the nature or origin of animal rights in their answers often scored highly. Where answers strayed away from the focus of the question and considered animal testing, marks were only awarded for relevant points which could be related to the treatment of pets and farm animals.

6GS02/01

General

Clearly many of this first cohort found the paper challenging; until everyone becomes more familiar with a new specification, this is not surprising. In terms of content, there were some excellent answers covering all parts of the specification – many students had made good use of the Student Book in preparing for this examination. There was, however, a weakness in the area of thinking and analytical skills (covered on pp5-8 of the Student Book) – many candidates encountered difficulty responding to questions about arguments from cause and/or analogy or in differentiating between fact and opinion, defining 'empirical' or in assessing the strength of evidence and argument in the Section B passage. Some candidates apparently ran out of time, since answers to Q30 were sometimes very short or else the question was not attempted at all. The suggestions in the rubric about how much time candidates should spend on each section reflect the marks available in each section. Section C contributes 40 out of the 90 marks for the whole paper.

Section A – Multiple Choice Questions

1   87.6% of candidates identified A as the correct answer, confirming that a higher percentage of employees in England have journeys which take more than an hour than in any other area of the UK.

2   69.9% of candidates correctly identified C (Scotland) as the answer.

3   71.1% of candidates identified D (Northern Ireland) as the correct answer.

4   66.4% of candidates correctly identified A with a value of 43% as the mode.

5   51.6% of candidates were able to place the decimal point correctly to choose C as the correct answer, indicating that 999,000 people in England spent more than 90 minutes per day commuting to work.

6   57.6% of candidates recognised that the definition given applied to an elite. The definition was similar to that given on P144 of the Student Book.

7   87.7% of candidates correctly chose A (a teenage gang) as an example of a subculture, discussed on P154 of the Student Book.

8   93.3% of candidates successfully recognised that a teenager's peer group was most likely to be choice B (fellow students at school or college), as in P154 and 156 of the Student Book.

9   70.2% of candidates understood that a reason for the decline in divorces in England and Wales was option B (because fewer people had chosen to get married), as on P58 of the Student Book.

10   68.1% of candidates successfully identified option C (increasing prices) as a description of inflation, as stated on P 73 and P147 of the Student Book.

11   77.5% of candidates correctly chose D (a situation in which some people are considered to be 'outside society') to describe social exclusion, as on P60 of the Student Book.

12   Only 35.2% of candidates recognised A (ignorance) as one of Lord Beveridge's five 'giant evils' which the Welfare State was established to attack (by improvements to education). The other evils were idleness, disease, squalour and poverty for which the Welfare State was designed to increase, respectively, employment, healthcare, housing and social security/pensions - as stated on P62 and P156 of the Student Book.

13   59.6% of candidates successfully identified a 'glass ceiling' as choice D (represents an invisible barrier which prevents women from being promoted at work), as discussed on P60 and P146 of the Student Book.

14   66.9% of candidates identified choice C (individuals moving from a lower social class to a higher social class) as the correct definition of upward social mobility, as discussed on P153 of the Student Book.

15   65.6% of candidates successfully recognised B (letter writing) as the most widely used form of communication in the first half of the twentieth century, a conclusion the Student Book (P64) no doubt helped them to reach.

16   Only 19.7% of candidates recognised that   option B (frictional unemployment) describes a situation where someone resigns from a job and is therefore unemployed in the short term before starting a new job, as discussed on P155 of the Student Book.

17   52.9% of candidates successfully recognised that the main reasons why recent British governments have pressured more mothers of young children to go to work were summarised in option C (statements ii and iv) – because the government wished to reduce the bill for state benefits and because the country has been short of workers as a result of the ageing population and low birth rate of recent years, as partly discussed on P72 of the Student Book.

18   Exactly 50% of candidates selected option C (primary socialisation) as referring to 'a process largely occurring in the family in which people learn attitudes, values and action appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture', as discussed on P70 of the Student Book.

19   Only 44.2% of candidates realised that choice D (positive discrimination) described the practice of an employer who resolves to employ only people with disabilities, as discussed on P143 of the Student Book.

20   69.1% of candidates successfully recognised option D (a cohesive society with one set of cultural values' as a description of a monocultural society, as discussed on P149 of the Student Book.

Section B – Data Response Questions

21(a) Many candidates provided no evidence to show they had considered the significance of a low turnout prior to this exam; answers were often muddled or contradictory. Those who pointed out that a candidate or party winning an election on a very low turnout had effectively been ignored/rejected by everyone who failed to vote tended to do well, as did those who said that a high turnout suggests democracy is working well – people have interest/confidence in 'the system' – and good turnouts generally provide more accurate representation for an area as a whole. A few very strong candidates pointed out that if there is a high turnout extremist candidates such as the BNP often find it more difficult to achieve success.

21(b) Candidates were slightly more successful in answering this second part of Q21. Weaker candidates often limited themselves to the relatively simple observation that Boris Johnson controlled an enormous budget, bigger than other local authorities and indeed bigger than some ministries. Stronger candidates pointed out that in 2008 no Conservatives were ministers in either the national or a devolved government, so Boris Johnson - as Mayor in the capital city - was the most important/and powerful or high-ranking Conservative in the country

22(a) Few candidates recognised the phrase given as being an argument from analogy, which is discussed on P6 of the Student Book.

22(b) Even fewer candidates than for the first part of this question were able to point out that analogies can involve a perceived suggestion of similarity between two cases being compared when in fact there may be no real closeness, parallel or connection at all.

23(a) Just a small proportion of candidates identified the statement as involving a causal argument, in line with the information in P6 of the Student Book.

23(b) A relatively few strong answers pointed out that while a cause does often lead to an effect, it isn't always the case that some event which occurs before another is in fact its cause. Often such answers went on to point out that people can mistake correlations for causes when in fact there is no element of cause/effect between the two variables so while it is true that the Evening Standard did criticise Mayor Livingstone before the election and subsequently he did lose Mayoralty, the reality is that the change may have been the result of quite different reasons.

24(a) Some of the better candidates matched the points in P7 of the Student Book. These candidates pointed out that an opinion is a moral or value judgement (unlike a fact) or that it is subjective (i.e. personal beliefs, feelings or reflections) and often is not verifiable so it cannot be proved, as a fact could be. Other candidates pointed out that an opinion would not be agreed by everyone and indeed may not be true.

24(b) Most of the candidates who identified as a fact the phrase 'Guardian columnist, Polly Toynbee' were often able to give a reason, saying that it could be proved or verified that Polly Toynbee does write for The Guardian. Sometimes they failed to gain a mark because the reason given was nowhere near to a definition or description of a fact. Those who stated the fact that "Guardian columnist, Polly Toynbee, told us we were 'a Tory campaign-sheet'" were awarded the mark as long as 'a Tory campaign-sheet' had inverted commas around it; those who failed to include the inverted commas were stating a fact and an opinion and this was not what the question sought.

25   Answers to this question about argument from authority were generally unconvincing; it was a minority of candidates who correctly identified the phrase: "As his own former leader, Neil Kinnock, argued, 'everyone likes Ken, except those who know him'." Some lost marks by stating just 'everyone likes Ken, except those who know him', missing the point that the strength of such arguments comes from the expertise of the person making the statement. Others chose other phrases, none of which could possibly have been examples of an argument from authority.

26   Many candidates seemed to think this question involved a great deal more than it did even though it offered only 2 marks. All candidates needed to do was to say that an 'empirical' report is a report based on observation or past experience, not theory, so the Evening Standard was claiming to have evidence to back up the claims it had made.

27   Answers to this question about impartiality in the media (covered in the Student Book in Chapter 8 (pp75-82) were generally not strong. A minority of better candidates did, however, recognise that some popular papers mix up news and opinions and sometimes demonstrate massive bias on the part of their owner or editor, often being purchased for the sport or because of screaming headlines or horoscopes (ie entertainment value), yet in a democracy they can also have a powerful pull on public opinion. Some very strong candidates recognised that popular newspapers aiming to achieve high circulation figures sometimes openly proclaimed opinions based on very odd news values which more serious newspapers would reject. By contrast, quality newspapers were seen as aiming to offer more objective analysis and generally not to combine news and opinions, though their leading articles do often reveal strongly-held opinions with, for example, *The Guardian*'s views being consistently to the left of the opinions expressed in *The Times* or *Daily Telegraph*. Even some weaker candidates recognised that terrestrial television is probably the least biased of the UK media since the BBC is required by its Charter to be impartial and a similar requirement exists of ITV in the Television Acts and the Broadcasting Acts. A few candidates also pointed out that in recent months the Office of Communications (Ofcom) has brought its regulatory powers to bear on internet providers and television companies (eg over 'swindle' phone-ins) to ensure they do not abuse their power in the media market, though such points were not always directed closely enough the question of impartiality.

28   In view of the relative weakness of responses to this question, the answers in most cases could have been considerably improved by close study of pp5-8 of the Student Book. The candidates had been advised not to give their own opinion on the issues raised, yet often did so. They had been asked to examine the evidence used by the writer to consider how well it supported the writer's arguments and conclusion, yet often they referred to neither evidence nor arguments! Having said that, those candidates who did explicitly take a critical look at particular pieces of evidence or argument generally put together a successful response, especially if they carefully differentiated fact and opinion and/or identified explicit forms of argument, highlighting their respective strengths and weaknesses before reaching a clear conclusion on how well the identified evidence supported the writer's arguments and conclusion.

Section C – Short Essays

29   This question about the value of artistic works or performance was fairly open ended, allowing candidates to focus on the areas of music, photography, film, literature, painting in which they are most interested. In discussing concepts such as style, innovation and rarity many - but not all candidates - were able to exemplify the judgements they offered with good evidence from a chosen, informed and well understood area of study. There were often clear signs that Chapter 9 of the Student Book (pp83-90) had been studied. Most candidates achieved a reasonable balance between AO1 (knowledge, understanding) and AO2 (selecting, interpreting, evaluating, interpreting). In the most successful answers candidates had something to say about each of the terms in the question; some candidates obviously made considerable use of the stimulus material while others scarcely acknowledged its existence. In relation to **value**, candidates typically asked questions such as whether value is inherent/intrinsic or all relative, how far it is linked to fashion as prescribed by competitions or opinion leaders, what causes tastes or values to change, how far monetary value depends on rarity and whether it is true that an artist has to be dead to be valued. **Quality** was often considered in the context of how the 'quality' of a work should be judged and how far it is technical matter or 'personal likes and dislikes'. **Style** in most answers was considered in terms of how things are categorised or how they are presented and whether it is reasonable to think of 'style' in terms of specific periods. Some of the most interesting points came in relation to **innovation** - what makes it happen, does innovation occur because society changes, how far does it depend on new technologies becoming available or does it totally depend on new composers, musicians, painters, photographers, writers arriving on the scene with works to show or things to say. The best answers were very interested in the area of **rarity**. Is an artist's work rare, they asked, because there is little work or because what there is rarely comes on the market or does scarcity alone account for high prices - and they also questioned whether rarity could be achieved by artists sometimes destroying their own work.

30   Whether or not UK citizens are able to exercise sufficient democratic control over British policy towards Europe is a major focus of the politics part of the specification. Again some candidates wisely made considerable use of the stimulus materials while others largely ignored such information; such candidates did, of course, gain credit for the 'value added' they were able to introduce into their answer. As in Q29, most candidates did achieve a reasonable balance between AO1 (knowledge, understanding) and AO2 (selecting, interpreting, evaluating, interpreting). Some answers reflected the content of pp97-99 of the Student Book, generally achieving above average scores. Some candidates did not attempt this question or else managed to produce only a very short answer, suggesting they had not got their timings quite right. The strongest candidates recognised that British policy on Europe often reflects the outcome of negotiations, compromises and alliances with other EU members, so as more countries joined, democratic inputs by UK citizens (via referendums, elections, opinion polls, parties, pressure groups, etc) perhaps had less chance of making a difference. Others simply discussed ways in which different forms of democratic influence might occur, often scoring more marks for AO1 than AO2 as a result.

Appendix A: Statistics

6GS01: Challenges for Society

Grade	Max.Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	57	52	47	42	37
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6GS02: The Individual in Society

Grade	Max.Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	58	51	44	38	32
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Notes:

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary Mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.