

General Studies

Advanced GCE A2 H479

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H079

Report on the Units

June 2010

H079/H479/R/10

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Chief Examiner's Report

This was the first summer sitting of the new four unit General Studies specification. It is pleasing to note a large entry of candidates from broad geographical spread of Centres. In reporting the outcomes of the examination a number of common points emerge; examiners noted:

- specific strengths in candidates' references to contemporary issues such as the Euro, global warming, developments in IT and concerns about the role of religion in contemporary society
- an overall weakness in candidates' responses to questions on cultural issues; in particular, a need to see the Arts as including poetry, prose, drama and music as well as painting, sculpture and photography
- a need to remind candidates that a calculator may be used in the Scientific Domain examination (Unit F732) but, in addition, that the inclusion of preparatory steps in any problem solving would be a useful insurance when an arithmetic slip might be made in an answer
- that Centres should increase the experience of candidates in describing the carrying out of practical tasks such as a scientific experiment or a piece of creative work, or their observation of such activity
- that handwriting and the construction of a well formed essay remain a weakness. Some Centres have been able to correct this by requiring that students complete pieces of extended writing by hand, rather than using a word processor, particularly in the period immediately prior to the examination.

Principal Examiners would also wish to draw the attention of Centres to the need not to 'over programme' their candidates. It is helpful to examiners if some questions carry an element of the unexpected. This enables candidates to demonstrate their flexibility and creativity in thinking through their responses to a question. Successful students often exhibit an originality in their responses that enhances their essays.

Examiners wish to congratulate Centres on the quality and imagination shown by candidates in many of their responses. Examiners look forward to reading and engaging with the next cohorts of students in January and June 2011.

F731 The Cultural and Social Domains

General Comments

Examiners are pleased to be able to report a successful paper that inspired some excellent responses and confirmed that many candidates are able to think openly, in a balanced way. Candidates were also able to present their views in a vibrant, enthusiastic, organised, and coherent way. There were very few papers spoiled because of rubric infringements or immaturity on the part of the candidate. Most students completed the paper in the time allowed with varying degrees of success and managed to respond in each of the four sections.

Previous reports have indicated the need for examination preparation before taking the General Studies papers. In the case of Sections A and D of this Unit there has been some improvement in the extraction of many marks as possible, with candidates remembering that if a question is worth three marks it is usual to expect that three items are needed in order to gain full marks.. This might consist of a key fact supported by some additional detail, explanation and/or example. A full answer is often easily achieved through the presentation of a single, well-constructed sentence; by the same rule, high-level mark in essays are awarded for a balanced and cogent response, not by centring efforts on personal, sometimes outrageous viewpoints (as was particularly prevalent in question two on animal rights and human rights).

Some topics in the specification still give cause for concern. Seemingly, any questions on the arts are avoided; clearly the study of or reference to the nine art forms detailed in the specification is largely omitted. As a consequence, question 1d - a compulsory question that required some reference to the techniques and materials of artists – was very badly answered. The majority of candidates' knowledge of the arts seems centred on contemporary popular music and even this is lacking security. Similarly, answers on the EU, an integral part of the specification, revealed only superficial knowledge - mostly restricted to holidays and exchanging currency. This reveals a clear picture that these areas need to be given greater priority in the design and construction of General Studies courses.

Time management does not appear to be a major issue. However, the general standard of English remains only satisfactory, since some candidates feel that General Studies may be approached in a more informal fashion than other A level subjects. This leads to the introduction of slang phrases and, at times, abuse and offensive suggestions. What did emerge was the inability to extend and develop ideas as opposed to attempting to furnish as many facts and examples as possible.

Frequently, examiners witnessed a breakdown of communication through inadequate expression or a disorganised thought process. Centres are reminded of the need for structured and organised examination practice. General Studies is a thinking examination and success depends on the skilful presentation of ideas and arguments that may be both tangible and controversial.

Section A: The Cultural Domain

Question 1

- a) The responses to this question varied since numbers of candidates ignored the notion of 'comparison'. Generally, candidates did not draw explicit attention to contrasts, leaving them to be understood implicitly. A description of the images would serve only as a vehicle for a more perceptive look by way of comparisons. It was important to match points raised about one image by reference to the other image: this proved to be the discriminator between acquiring marks in the middle of the range or in the high bands. A number of

candidates were able to raise three or four points by directly comparing each feature cited about each image and scored well. Simply to talk about oil and how poverty is still rife in third world countries was not central to the question's requirements.

- b) Source 2 proved a popular choice, as did the *Charity Flyer*. Whether suggesting poverty, the exploitation of developing countries or child abuse, the image was felt to be arresting and thought provoking and likely to encourage offers of assistance and/or financial support. It could stand alone or bear the addition of text. It was difficult for many candidates to reach four marks for this question simply because they had not recognised that were asked for two items; the award of six marks meant that, having stated the point, there were two marks available for extension and example (a technique that has been referred to in previous reports.). A few candidates wrote about both sources, instead of choosing one.
- c) The question was answered well, although there were some unexplained assumptions. The advantages of removing the distractions of colour, enhancing drama by heightening contrast, giving a period feel, or developing a sombre mood were common themes, though sometimes candidates encountered difficulty in expressing their views due to restrictions in their vocabulary.
- d) The best answers to this question were clearly presented by 'arts' students though, ironically, some of these responses were hampered by the temptation to become over-technical and thereby confuse the general reader. The naming of a specific art form and the discussion of two ways or techniques, supplemented by examples of specific works of art where the 'ways' could be seen in evidence, constituted a 'good' answer. Some students failed to engage with this question, as they did not understand what an art form was. In general, answers seemed to rely on vague descriptions of a piece of work known to the candidate rather than presenting an appreciation of the process of creating the work.

Too many candidates did not seem aware of the nine art forms listed in the specification and this led to some inappropriate choices. Those who knew about an art form often simply described a work or wrote in vague terms. There were some very good answers, where knowledge of specific works was well applied to the question. Graffiti was popular, linked to the works of Banksy, and photography frequently ran through the technical vocabulary on apertures, Adobe Photoshop and even 'mise en scene'. However, few managed to specify how these techniques contributed to the meaning or feelings generated by the finished work. Some referred to research, few tackled inspiration; a number catalogued graphic techniques, armed with the hallowed *designer's brief*. Musical entries generally followed this pattern, referring to the range of instruments at the band's or composer's disposal but failing to illustrate what effects a particular instrumental timbre might achieve.

Section B: The Cultural Domain

Question 2

A very popular question, perhaps not surprisingly, that attracted some emotive and unbalanced responses. Candidates often wrote well about animal rights and carefully considered issues such as testing on animals, and battery farming. Most admitted they ate meat, but there were a few vegetarians, who considered farm animals and their treatment. Areas mined for support ranged from evolution and pre-history through twentieth century history to contemporary legislation and environmental sciences.

There was some evidence that students who had studied Religious Studies and Ethics were well equipped to establish the conceptual framework of an effective short essay. Most considered

that, although animals do have rights, these are not equal to those of humans. There was much consideration of research using animals to cure human diseases such as cancer, revealing the feeling that humans *should* be tested, but most reluctantly accepting the need for work with animals. Religious views were often quoted, with the Bible and the Koran both used to defend animal rights. There were some very well argued pieces of writing reflecting on the complexity of the balance between animal rights and human endeavour, often in a range of contexts and considering a variety of animals. The profundity of thought and depth of candidates' feelings never ceases to impress examiners. The following example clearly demonstrates this: "Yet we, being the most powerful species on earth, have a duty of care to all life on earth, if not to protect them, to protect our eco-system and ultimately ourselves." The context was approached in a variety of legitimate ways. On the other hand, there were a number of students who floundered under the demands of balancing an opposing view with what they really thought and who produced seriously disjointed pieces of writing.

Question 3

This question was generally well answered. It was often clear which candidates were studying business or economics, from the approach and technical expertise introduced to the suggested strategies, though at times some specialist knowledge was introduced regardless of its suitability. A number of candidates included disadvantages even though these were not required, though at times it can be useful to mention the opposite case as a way of strengthening an argument. Marks were not lost for this approach but over-indulgence can result in a loss of valuable time. A significant number of essays appeared as two paragraphs simply outlining two advantages, without a solid structure and format. Only a small number accessed the highest-level marks by establishing a broader context in the format of a conventional extended essay and backing this with specific examples.

Question 4

There were very few answers to this question and the quality of those was not high. Knowledge of past works of art seemed to be restricted to certain classics such as 'The Mona Lisa' and the works of Picasso. Detailed knowledge was lacking and most answers were short. Other areas of art were not often considered, though there were some musical examples - mostly restricted to popular music over the last 40 years. Analysis was often brief, if attempted at all and, as a result, many essays consisted of descriptions of the works based on the limited knowledge that candidate had acquired.

Section C: The Social Domain

Question 5

- a) It appears there has been progress made in tackling this style of question, where candidates are asked to consider the context of the words or phrase and offer their own meaning or interpretation. However, a number of candidates merely repeated words featured in the phrases eg 'decline', 'stop-start', 'culture', 'dependency', without showing that they understood these words. This produced varying answers. For example, in i) 'hub' was not always understood, although 'decline' was. Margaret Thatcher was identified as a contributor to the situation, but no elaboration was offered. Many candidates were able to rephrase and develop points adequately by having a general sense of what the term has come to imply.
- b) A competent answer required more than simply listing the items that were mentioned in the test. By the same rule, defining 'gridlock' did not provide the information required about

how the problems were going to be tackled. If these points were overcome then it was quite straightforward for candidates to score full marks.

- c) This question was generally answered well, with only a minority misreading the text and thinking that London had two zones.
- d) The 'three measures' were well outlined by most and there was usually some development of each. Candidates showed good knowledge of alternatives to car congestion. However, in order to access the higher mark bands it was important to extend, develop or exemplify points or even point out shortcomings and misgivings.

Section D: The Social Domain

Question 6

Candidates who chose this question clearly understood what the Euro is and how it works. They were able to outline the advantages of common trading and banking. For the U.K., the main advantage seemed to be for those going to the Euro area on holiday without the fuss of changing money before, or after. The disadvantages were well considered, with the pound being stronger than the Euro and the consequent financial loss to Britain. Many considered the loss of our independent currency too much to accept, with implications for our history and the monarchy. The usual conclusion was that joining the Euro would not be a good idea for the U.K. The case of Greece was included as a negative example, but usually this was not developed due to lack of knowledge. Most answers, however, seemed to have been written by non-specialists who ignored the political dimension. The production of pairs of advantages and disadvantages, distinct from each other, proved to be quite difficult. The scope was narrow, relating often to the "hassle" or "stress," of having to change money when going on holiday or the notorious inability of the older population to cope with strange new notes and coins. Poor answers usually identified the cost and/or disadvantage of having a distinct currency as "the exchange rate" itself, rather than the "spread" or commission applied to transactions.

Question 7

This question was chosen by a few candidates - and was not very well answered on the whole, as it was seen as an opportunity to level unfounded and inappropriate criticisms at candidates' own schools and at the inadequacies of their secondary education. The most popular subject for removal was Religious Education, which was seen as pointless, unless you were personally religious. Students had already learned all they needed to know in earlier years; few students were interested in religion (some because of the excesses of extremists); and there was no point in taking a half subject not leading to a full GCSE. Another popular choice was Personal and Social Education, with claims that knowledge about sex and drugs was not necessary in the formal school curriculum but better left as a 'life' skill or to remain the responsibility of families.

The typical answer from younger students carried a simple message: there were too many subjects in the curriculum, causing students too much stress in their examination years and therefore some subjects should be abandoned. Solutions ranged from devoting time saved to extra classes in core subjects (English and Maths) and extra revision classes, current affairs or even developing social skills. However, a fair number just wanted more free time and less compulsion. This was rarely justified in any convincing way. Apart from the number of unexamined contradictions in many answers, there was a variety of ideas for the use of the time saved and these varied from trivial to sensible. Knowledge of the curriculum appeared to be limited, with many candidates simply expressing very strong views on where "things had gone wrong" and leaving no room for argument or discussion.

Question 8

This question was a very popular choice. The influence of area, people and culture and traditions was well analysed. Candidates distinguished the areas of influence accurately, and the better ones consciously pointed up the way one influence affected another, for example, where location determines the sub-culture you are surrounded by and the people you socialise with. Most managed both positive and negative effects, which were supported by personal exemplars. The importance of loving families, good schooling and a solid background were clearly appreciated and understood. There were many comments about the dangers of peer pressure, which can lead young people astray, eg into drugs, crime, and teenage pregnancy. However, the opposite was often quoted, with pressure from friends to work hard and do well. Candidates appreciated the efforts that they must put in as well. Nearly all tackled the three sections and the main weakness was in failing to find possible negatives in the part on culture and tradition. Most answers were lengthy and well argued, using personal experience. The question provided a natural paragraphing structure that most students took advantage of and most essays were of adequate length. Some good answers integrated accurate references to sociological concepts and sociologists. The more thoughtful answers sidestepped the trap of determinism by giving examples of individuals who have defied their circumstances, Alan Sugar being a favourite exemplar.

F732 The Scientific Domain

There was a large entry for this summer sitting of the paper for 2010 with Centres from all over the country opting to bring candidate entries forward.

The scripts for Unit 732 revealed an energetic and intelligent response from many candidates. Centres are to be congratulated on their preparation of so many candidates. It is clear to examiners that where candidates have received instruction on the specification and a briefing on the shape of the paper they are able to show what they know, understand and what they can do. Conversely, candidates from some Centres appear to have little idea of the demands of a General Studies Science Paper and so under-perform.

A number of common features were identified by the examiners including the following:

- candidates showed an informed concern for environmental matters in their assessment of the relative merits of the alternative power sources listed in question 3
- it was pleasing to note the sensitive way in which candidates assessed the relative merits of two of the health priorities mentioned in question 4
- the mathematical competence of some candidates was tested to the limit in question 2
- some candidates placed their scripts at risk through handwriting that was very difficult to read
- some Centres need to make sure that their candidates have more experience of writing at length on the types of topic found in Section B.

Question 1

- (a) In this question the candidates had to identify wavelength and amplitude on a sound wave diagram. The majority were able to do so.
- (b) This question called for the substitution of numbers for Greek letters in a formula and a simple mathematical multiplication. The greater majority were able to complete the substitution. Some were unable to finish the multiplication and complained of having forgotten their calculator. Others correctly obtained the answer of 343 for the speed of sound but failed to add any units. As a consequence they lost one of the four marks available.
- (c) (i) This question asked candidates to show how they would obtain an approximate value for the speed of sound given only a stop watch, a 100 metre tape and a tall building. Many were able to do this by measuring 100 metres or more from the tall building. They then found how long it took for a sound they made to echo from the building. They explained how the speed could be calculated using the formula distance/time. There were many good answers that included refinements on this basic model.

Sadly, for quite a number of candidates the tall building proved a distraction. Often these candidates used the height of the building as their distance part of the equation without reference to problems of timing or distance measurement. Some weaker candidates appeared not to understand the nature of an echo.

A particular point worthy of note for this paper is that six of the thirty marks for Section A are allocated for AO4 Communication. Two of these six marks were allocated in this question. This challenge required an amount of communication dexterity to explain the set up and execution of this experiment. Far too many

candidates lost one of these marks because it was not totally clear how they would undertake all aspects of the operation.

- (ii) This question developed out of question 1(c)(i) and required candidates to suggest two ways in which they could improve the experiment they had described. It is pleasing to note that many candidates met this challenge well. They clearly had experience of the types of activity that could improve the accuracy of experimental results. These included repetition, the elimination of anomalous results and the calculation of statistical indicators. Some concentrated on improved apparatus whilst others involved a larger team.

In general, candidates did well with this question.

- (d) The final part of the question asked candidates to explain why the appearance of an aircraft in the sky appears to run ahead of the sound.

In general, candidates were able to answer this challenge successfully. They noted the difference between the speed of sound and light. Some candidates became involved with explanations based upon supersonic aircraft but were unable to carry through their thoughts.

Some imaginative candidates linked good answers to phenomena related to fireworks and lightening.

Question 2

A key aspect of the Science Domain in General Studies is mathematical understanding. Normally this will be tested explicitly in Section A of the Unit 732 paper. The usual pattern will be in terms of problem solving where a certain amount of mathematical skill is needed. The recall of mathematical formula will not normally be needed. Questions 2(a) and (b) represented the main mathematical understanding part of this paper.

- (a) In this question the candidates were given information about the shopping habits of a family. They were then asked to work out the day on which they would shop again for all of the four items given in the question. The three main ways in which candidates approached this question were:

- (i) to draw a chart and then insert the data given in the question. Eventually they came to the sixtieth day where the family would shop again for all four items. The principal problem with this approach was the ability of the candidates, perhaps given the time constraints, to produce a manageable chart. Those that did were able to capitalise on it in section (b).
- (ii) one alternative, which the more mathematical astute used was to search for a number into which all four of the periodicities given in the question would divide. A quick, but false route was simply to multiply all four numbers together and reach a total of 120. Candidates gained some credit for this answer. More often these candidates with greater mathematical skill noted that sixty was also available.
- (iii) a failed alternative by some candidates was to move away from the numerical numbering of days to call them Monday, Tuesday etc. Some then applied conventional shopping habits such as a major supermarket visit on Friday evening without any regard to the mathematical data provided. As a result they gained few, if any, marks.

Centres should note that mathematical tests of this type are prone to slips of logic or calculation. However if a candidate shows their preliminary thinking and

'workings out' they could be awarded marks. It is suspected that some candidates undertook a great deal of work on rough paper that was not submitted with their incorrect answer. As a result examiners were unable to award them any marks. Centres are encouraged to recommend to their candidates that they show their 'working out' even when the question does not specifically state that it is required.

- (b) The scripts for this question showed a very similar pattern to that for question 2(a). Some candidates re-read their chart and found 16 days when no food was purchased. Others found days eg 7, 11 and 17 when none of the periods of purchase were appropriate. One slip for some candidates was to believe that the days were all prime numbers. Sadly this did not produce exactly the correct answer but candidates did gain some credit.

Again it is worth repeating that Centres would find benefit in exposing their candidates to these informal logic puzzles that have a mathematical base. Problem solving of this type will be a useful skill for other studies as well as for everyday life.

Question 3

This question asked candidates to assess the relative merits of coastal nuclear power stations, renewable energy sources and coal fired power stations near to coal reserves. Candidates were asked to identify the disadvantages of each of these strategies in solving the energy needs of the UK in the near future.

Questions of this type at AS level have a clear structure. The majority of candidates used this structure in constructing their answer. At A2, the structure may be less explicit and candidates will have greater freedom to develop answers to their strengths. Centres are recommended to ensure that their candidates have experience of both of these types of question at the appropriate points in their course.

The majority of candidates rightly worked their way through the three strategies listed. In this, they showed a good awareness of the issues and a pleasing concern for the environment. Many gave examples of power stations in their area and cited incidents that have reduced confidence in a particular strategy.

One frequent error was to link some power station emissions to holes in the Ozone layer. Quite a number of candidates suggested that nuclear power stations had emissions similar to those of a coal fired station and therefore contributed to global warming through their carbon dioxide output! There was perhaps an overemphasis on the dangers represented by nuclear waste. Some examiners were surprised and pleased by the up to date positions that candidates had about global warming. These candidates wrote of the evidence that places new uncertainties on the role of people in global temperature change.

There was also sympathetic understanding for residents living within the area where new power stations may be located. The candidates noted the potential damage to local businesses and the tourist industry, the problems of visual and noise pollution with some renewable sources and conditions that might surround new coal extraction points.

Question 4

This question provided a challenge that may have been unfamiliar to some candidates; they were asked to select two from a list of four health priorities and argue the case for one of their choices over the other. The fact that all four were worthy of support made this question particularly interesting.

The candidates who were more successful tended to select either the HIV/Aids or the Breast Cancer option as their choice for priority. These were frequently ranked against treatment for dementia or infertility. Such a pairing provided plenty of materials with which to show the balance of priority. The life threatening nature of HIV/Aids and Breast Cancer appeared to be the dominant argument. Less successful were candidates who decided to rank HIV/Aids against Breast Cancer treatment.

Some examiners found a number of the comments about treatment for older people a little disturbing though no penalty in marks was applied. The kinds of comment that they reported included 'older people are going to die soon anyway' and 'older people have had their lives'.

The majority of answers to this question were well structured and made the two cases clear. Some of the very good answers included reservations about their second choice. For example when HIV/Aids was preferred to infertility, candidates mentioned that there are alternative ways to build a family such as surrogacy and adoption. They also qualified their position by pointing out the strong feelings that some couples might have in wanting a child of their own. This ability to see choices in shades of grey rather than just black and white is to be commended.

A number of candidates included quite painful recollections drawn from their personal experience and they are to be commended for this use of evidence to support their case. They were able to use their experience as evidence rather than as anecdote.

Question 5

This was the least popular of the three Section B questions. It involved candidates showing how scientists have used classification as a tool in their work. Candidates also needed to point out difficulties that scientists could have in using a classification.

Whilst the question was not as popular as question 3 and 4 it was clear that the majority of candidates selecting it did so from a position of strength. Frequently they used other studies eg biology to illustrate their points to great effect.

In terms of difficulties they usually cited problems of new observations straining existing classes or more recent measurements suggesting errors in earlier work.

Conclusion

This was a successful examination paper on which a large number of examiners commented that they had enjoyed reading the responses from candidates. This reflects the engagement of the candidates with the topics in the paper. At the same time it shows that Centres had prepared their candidates well so that they could give their best attempt.

Pointers to aid further improvement include the following:

- candidates should have more experience of designing and undertaking a scientific investigation or experiment
- well prepared candidates tend to score well on problem solving challenges
- it is crucial that candidates recognise that they need to communicate with the examiner who is tasked to read their script eg through recognition of the focus and structure of the question, clear handwriting and careful proof reading
- Centres need to provide AS candidates with experience of writing at length in a clear and coherent manner eg through using past papers to offer experience to future candidates.

F733 Domain Exploration: Applying Synoptic Skills

General Comments

A large entry engaged well with this paper and it is encouraging to note that there were very few deliberately spoiled scripts. Many Examiners reported full and detailed answers to the questions in Section A. In Section B, Question 5 proved to be the most popular, followed by Question 7 and then Question 6.

A full range of marks was awarded and examiners felt that questions had discriminated effectively. A significant number of candidates, however, struggled in Section A with the new style of questions, where they are required to demonstrate skills rather than knowledge.

The first three questions are to be answered briefly, using a range of Thinking, Analytical and Synoptic skills and this is indicated by the mark allocation of only ten marks. Question 4, a short synoptic essay, attracts twenty marks, so that a longer (but still concise) answer is required. Many candidates wrote Section A answers that were far too long, thus using up more than half of their ninety minute time allocation. In turn, this meant that they went on to Section B with little time to think, prepare and write, producing essays that were rushed, uneven in quality and occasionally scrappy. This is a matter of examination technique as much as anything else and Centres will help their candidates by giving them as much practice as possible in Section A style questions.

Examiners noticed some significant improvement in grammar and spelling, although some noted that candidates now use a very limited range of punctuation - commas and full stops for the most part. Balancing this was a marked deterioration in handwriting, which presumably reflects the fact that most candidates usually undertake extended writing in a word processed format. As a result some, scripts were almost indecipherable, even though the quality of the work was often sound enough.

Question 1

This question, designed as a straightforward introduction to the paper, allowed candidates to score well. Candidates evaluated the predictions in terms of their value and importance and offered straightforward comments. The best answers noted the significant term "relative importance" and ranked the predictions accordingly. Interestingly, very few candidates interrogated the predictions, where phrases like "up to 70%" or "approximately £600" offered such an opportunity.

Question 2

Skills based questions need to be read carefully before the answer is planned and this question exemplified this principle. The NASUWT context had to be acknowledged for an answer to be really successful, but many candidates missed this point and offered more or less secure critiques of BNP policies. This question also allowed a variety of approaches and candidates arguing for the NASUWT policy did so on the grounds of the BNP's pledges. Those arguing against wrote of personal freedom to belong to a legitimate political party, as well as noting that professional teachers would not bring their political convictions into the classroom.

Question 3

This was an accessible question where candidates scored well. Many pointed to public holidays based on religious festivals, RE teaching in schools, and the basis of our laws in the Decalogue. Some candidates wrote of the role of religion in creating social tensions and divisions - often instancing Northern Ireland, and examiners saw this as a legitimate approach.

Question 4

Examiners felt that this question was the most effective discriminator in Section A. It offered candidates the opportunity to adopt a variety of approaches, which is central to a synoptic question, and the best candidates did this. Many interrogated the sources from a number of points of view, citing a range of statistical arguments, the effect of demand characteristics on data collection and anomalies in dates and research periods. Many also referred to the qualifications in the first data set - "conscious effort"; "as much as possible"; "unnecessary" and developed convincing arguments from those. Less able candidates pointed out these qualifications and also suggested that people may lie in surveys to make themselves appear greener. The best candidates not only explained the findings well but evaluated the extent to which they were contradictory.

Question 5

This was the most popular essay, and many who attempted it produced adequately effective work. The main weakness of many answers was simple assertion of value judgements - such as "this is clearly a miracle", or "this woman had no right to risk the life of her baby" - which were not then developed in any way. Better candidates saw that there could be no "right" answer, and that when the decision was taken it had to be done on the basis of a "best fit" regarding the rights, needs and wishes of everyone involved. The best answers also made useful reference to wider concepts such as personal autonomy and utilitarianism and the deep conflicts between medical professionalism, culture and belief and the law and ethics.

Question 6

This was the least popular essay question and, because it is more complex than it perhaps appears to be, it generally produced the weakest answers. Candidates whose work lay towards the lower end of Level 3 or Level 2 tended to offer simplistic arguments along the lines of "paintings vs cancer treatment", which could be exemplified but not fully developed. What was required was an examination of the role of the arts in society, the connections between artists and the public and a realisation that 'the arts' comprise a great deal more than painting, classical music and the Royal Shakespeare Company. This question required a considerable knowledge base and candidates who attempted it without this base found themselves with little of relevance to say.

Question 7

Candidates who took the trouble to deconstruct the question and use their findings to make an essay plan tended to do well on this. Many good candidates wrote thoughtfully of the purpose and relative success of prison and community sentences.

They noted that the statistics needed to be evaluated - community sentences are imposed for lesser offences and may not be as effective as prison for recidivists. In considering a range of measures, many candidates showed knowledge and understanding of attempts to socialise

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criminals away from their peer groups and of the roles of counselling, psychotherapy and rehabilitation.

Less able candidates tended to write off community sentencing as a 'soft option' and, in considering the alternative measures, often showed an unsettling relish in proposing the return of capital and corporal punishment, detention at hard labour and in some cases, the death penalty for recidivists. Such candidates clearly felt that society deserved to revenge itself on criminals and often wrote of the luxurious conditions in prisons which led to the commission of crime in order to enhance the criminals' standard of living.

Some of the very best answers wrote of crime and criminals as a social phenomenon which expresses something about the society in which they exist and developed wide ranging and interesting arguments from this. Such answers were a pleasure to read.

F734 Culture, Science and Society: Making Connections

General Comments

This was the second session of the new specification for A2. The structure of the paper required that candidates answer two questions within the one and a half hour time constraint by responding to stimulus material(s).

The vast majority of candidates approached this examination in a serious and mature manner. Their efforts in answering the questions is to be commended and examiners noted a wide and varied range of knowledge and experience introduced into responses. Many candidates showed increased evidence of planning their answers and were able to write in a fluent and coherent manner in an extended essay format.

Examiners commented very positively on the breadth of knowledge and understanding which was demonstrated through responses. This was particularly evident in relation to responses for question two, although many of the more able candidates demonstrated a breadth of knowledge and understanding for question one as well.

While it is recognised that candidates are writing at speed and attempting to show as much knowledge, understanding and experience as possible, it is also vital that this is done in a manner which can be readily understood by the examiner. A number of concerns regarding the illegibility of handwriting were expressed and a marked drop was noted in the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Examiners wondered if more practice in extended hand - writing at speed whilst still writing legibly might be incorporated into preparations for examinations.

While there were fewer scripts which did not fulfil the rubric requirements, it was noted that a number of candidates were unable to allocate their time evenly between questions. Whilst there were fewer scripts which had responses to only one question, there were a significant number of scripts where the response to the first question was far more detailed and/or much longer than the second.

The source material continues to offer candidates a springboard from which to fashion their response. However, answers which simply copy or paraphrase the source do not access the higher range of marks.

The cultural domain remains the most challenging for candidates to consider. In essence this domain includes reference to: beliefs; values; religion; the role of the media and attitudes and changing attitudes. There were opportunities for candidates to make reference to these issues but weaker candidates appeared less able to do so.

Question 1

This question focussed on threats to the survival of sporting spirit. The source material offered a range of examples which demonstrated sporting spirit in various guises. It was apparent that not all candidates spent time reading the source material before creating their response. Regularly, candidates supposed that Vipa Bernhardt had been refused a place in the German swimming squad due to failing a drugs test when in fact she had not achieved the required time in order to be selected.

More able candidates offered a definition of sporting spirit so that they had a 'point of reference' for their work. Weaker answers tended to give no definition of sporting spirit and in these instances it often became clear that the candidate had little comprehension of the term.

Generally, the sources were used to good effect, although many weaker candidates failed to give additional examples. More able candidates not only offered a definition of their understanding of sporting spirit but were also able to introduce additional relevant examples either from events they had seen or read about, or those that related to their own experience. Examiners noted that there were a number of examples related to sport which had been watched rather than in relation to actual participation. Indeed the best candidates were able to consider the wider role of sporting spirit within science, culture and society.

A number of responses considered current examples such as the World Cup or the Olympics. It was disappointing to note that few candidates offered personal experience to either support or refute the suggestion made in the source and that few explored in any detail the experience of the amateur sportsman.

Examiners found that candidates were able to offer more examples from the social and cultural domain than from the scientific one. The source offered an opportunity for discussion in this area but weaker candidates often failed to take advantage of this.

Better responses were able to offer a balance to their answers and considered threats as well as instances of successful maintenance of sporting spirit before considering the extent to which sporting spirit might survive developments in each of the domains.

Question 2

This question asked candidates to consider the damage mankind had done to life on the earth and offer actions that would work towards reparation. The source gave minimal information and so candidates were required to demonstrate awareness, knowledge and understanding.

Candidates were able to identify a range of damage that had been inflicted although explanations of how the damage had arisen were not always accurate. Weaker candidates tended to spend considerable time identifying damage and not discussing actions which might be taken in order for repair to occur. Such responses were often presented as a list, with little or no development or example. These answers also ignored the extent to which these actions might be successfully taken.

It was pleasing to note the range of actions which came from the scientific or social domain. Candidates appeared to have more difficulty here in considering actions from the cultural domain; these often related to changing attitudes or behaviour on the part of society.

More able candidates were able to link actions across domains and often discussed the extent of success at the same time as identifying the action. A widely offered conclusion was that damage cannot totally be repaired but the rate of damage may be slowed down.

The better responses considered a range of actions which stemmed from individuals to local or national governments and to international action. Weaker responses described ideas which both lacked specificity and were unrealistic or unworkable.

On some occasions candidates challenged the source or provided alternative explanations before considering a response which related to the question in hand.

Summary points

Centres are thanked for the professional manner in which the majority of candidates approached the examination. In preparing for future examinations Centres are encouraged to offer candidates the opportunity for discussion of a wide range of subjects. The debating experience is one method by which candidates can consider a range of opinions before reaching their own conclusions. These are skills which are then transferable to the examination forum, particularly when candidates are asked to consider the 'extent to which' an issue might be relevant.

In order to afford themselves the best opportunity to gain the highest marks, candidates are advised to practise the art of producing focused and relevant writing. Very often the question will ask for candidates to consider their own personal experience in relation to a matter. Personal observation and experience often serve to enhance a response and can add insight into understanding.

Centres are asked to remind candidates that while it is necessary to write at some speed in order to fulfil the requirements of the examination paper, it is also necessary to produce work which is legible and in a format which is appropriate for the formality of the examination procedure.

Centres are congratulated for the professional manner in which they have prepared candidates for this examination. It is pleasing to note that many candidates have risen to the challenge of synopticity which this paper presents.

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