

## **General Studies**

Advanced GCE A2 H479

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H079

# **OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2013**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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**Advanced GCE General Studies (H479)**

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## Overview

In this introduction, the comments of the senior examination team focus on the key points and issues that have arisen during the summer season. It remains clear that a student's ability to think rationally and logically about a range of subjects, and present a reasoned case in written form, will ensure positive achievement in General Studies. Centres are asked to dispel the myth that candidates only need to acquire a vast and detailed knowledge base before entering the examination room. Throughout a General Studies course, the skills that are developed are as important as the information that is gathered. It is possible that many candidates will have strong feelings about some of the topics referred to by the questions; it is important to apply critical and logical thinking skills to them in order to create a discussion, form an argument, present an opinion, and formulate a conclusion. This process of joined-up thinking and linked ideas is the backbone of General Studies.

At **AS level** both units performed well and examiners were delighted to see so many candidates engaging with the subjects and their debates so enthusiastically. Examiners made the following further observations:

- for short answer questions, there is a need to note the number of marks available and to plan time accordingly
- the command words in questions need to be identified - for example: *explain, describe, outline, discuss* - to ensure that a concise approach is taken when constructing an answer; ideas need to be developed and expanded and not simply presented in their barest form
- for an essay, the greatest amount of credit will be awarded for an answer that uses *thinking skills* to present, debate and formulate a viewpoint
- in Unit F732, using a scientific calculator gives candidates a better chance of answering mathematics-based questions
- *social domain* does **not** equate to *social life*; this misinterpretation was a clear indication of those candidates who had not been thoroughly prepared for the examination.

At **A2 level**, many candidates displayed composure and maturity in deploying their skills. Their level of fluency was generally good or better and there is more confirmation from this session that candidates understand the notion of synoptic thinking. Essays were mostly written fairly and honestly with balanced and carefully crafted views. Examiners made the following further observations:

- when tackling Unit F733, an appropriate and manageable balance of time will ensure that there is enough remaining to complete a convincing essay in Section B
- in general, candidates do not fully understand the word *extent*; there is a tendency to present unbalanced and one-sided responses that do not explore alternative viewpoints
- in Unit F734, there continues to be a tendency to spend an disproportionate amount of time on one question and then to offer a brief and insubstantial essay for the second question
- the general knowledge of students on the construction and workings of public services, such as the NHS and the taxation system, is woefully inadequate; this is particularly noticeable as the public services are a feature as AS level content
- the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar continues to be of great concern.

Centres need to recognise that *thinking skills* are specifically highlighted in the Specification (see page 16) and that they underpin all of the units. One of these skills was clearly tested in question 3 of Unit F733 (recognising common fallacies) but the majority of candidates were clearly not equipped to answer this question. It is important to ensure that all of these skills are embedded into any General Studies course, overtly or discretely, in order to give candidates the best chance of fulfilling their potential.

Whilst it is acknowledged that a large number of students complete their studies with the aid of IT - and the value of this experience is undoubted and irrefutable as they progress into Higher Education and employment - centres must also remember that the vast majority of public examinations involve candidates using the written word. Examiners expect to read properly formatted sentences, and paragraphs that are used strategically as a way of presenting a cogent and convincing structure to an essay. Equally, it is reasonable to expect that words in common usage (as well as words that are printed on the examination paper) are spelt correctly. The practising of writing under pressure, and within a time limit, is an essential precursor to taking the A2 General Studies papers.

## F731 The Cultural and Social Domains

### General Comments

It is pleasing to report the positive and engaging way in which candidates approached this examination. The variety and quality of answers revealed the wide range of experiences that young people are acquiring, as well as the range and variety of courses being designed by centres to cover the specification requirements of the cultural and social domains. However, centres are reminded that at Advanced level candidates are assessed for their ability to communicate their response. In this respect, hurried, short, bulleted or sketched answers will place candidates at a disadvantage. This is particularly important in Sections B and D where it is essential that the essay is written in continuous prose.

In terms of preparation and approach to the examination, some key issues should be addressed by candidates:

- read the questions fully to avoid the inclusion of superfluous or irrelevant material
- answer only one of the essay questions in Sections B and D; there are still too many instances of candidates that answer all three
- when presenting an argument that is supporting a view, there must be some justification or analysis; too many opinions are given as fact, with no justification, and thereby the answer becomes mere unfounded assertion
- the structure of a response is very important; too many arguments are confused, with candidates agreeing **and** disagreeing with all points rather than providing a clear, cogent conclusion that reveals a personal view
- some candidates write too much on short answers and not enough for long answers; candidates need to be aware of the number of marks for each question and use their time accordingly.

### Question 1

- a) Virtually all candidates responded well by providing interesting and informed ideas. This was a clear case for ensuring that the question was read carefully as failing to adhere to the rubric resulted in a disadvantage. If candidates included points for **and** against the general acceptance of human rights, examiners were bound to assess only the first ideas presented and discard others. In many cases this was not a problem, but for some answers where the second choice was explained more fully than the first it meant they could not be awarded any credit. Most were able to make a convincing case for their chosen rights, often with further development of their ideas and relevant supporting examples from their own knowledge and experience.
- b i) The range of answers varied according to how the candidate placed the emphasis on the words of the sentence. A minority concentrated on the idea of *basic* rights whilst the majority focused on the idea of *any culture*. The reasons identified included *equality for all humans, uniformity of treatment*, and - in a world where people travel more and more - *it would remove possible confusion and conflict*.
- b ii) The most popular reasoning included reference to cultural or religious differences, with examples taken from established religious practice. Some restrict the rights of women to make their own choices regarding dress or marriage partners. Other good responses included citing the existence of dictatorships, such as that in North Korea, where people's rights to freedom of information or to democracy are restricted.
- c) The question gave candidates the opportunity to consider a range of current and often controversial issues and to use empathy combined with common sense to outline possible solutions. This was a serious test of candidates' thinking skills in providing solutions to problems raised by the source.
- Many excellent answers resulted from the examination of issues such as racism, discrimination, gang violence and the shortage of housing. These answers demonstrated

considerable familiarity with the magnitude of the problems and recognised that simple solutions were often impossible. Practicality or plausibility was sometimes ignored and the result was headline comments such as: *stop all immigration, sentence the youths to long jail terms, help the woman to get a job so that she can buy a house*. More practical solutions recognised the need for immediate security, along with more long term ways of possibilities such as *retraining the housing officer, more education in schools to eradicate racism and discrimination* and, more controversially, the *international community should make more effort to try and help to solve the problems in Somalia which leads to asylum seekers*.

Despite it being worth twelve marks, some candidates did not fully engage with the question and provided short responses that omitted any reference to the key issues and made simple assertions leading to implausible solutions.

### Question 2

This proved to be a very popular choice of question. The biggest problem that faced examiners was that most candidates did not fully appreciate or understand the legal position of faith based schools in the UK – eg in relation to admissions policies or funding arrangements - or the differences between private religious schools and Church of England or Roman Catholic schools that operate partly within the local authority system; the general assumption was that all faith schools were the same.

The essence of a good response was a clear balance between a positive and negative viewpoint. Essays that introduced a list of ideas that were not clearly explained and developed resulted in fewer marks being awarded due to the dilution of material. The excellent academic record of many faith based schools was a common point made, coupled with the fact that pupils gained a clear system of morals and values. Indoctrination was a common citation related to personal experience, usually from Primary education where the common theme was that pupils are forced to engage in religious practices such as prayers and hymn singing. Weaker candidates often introduced dubious and sweeping generalisations that faith schools did not teach the National Curriculum or that they did not allow children from other faiths to attend.

### Question 3

The question was concerned with the **role** for censorship in the media; an examination of the extent to which the media **is** censored was not a key component and led to descriptive rather than analytical essays. However there were some very impressive responses in which candidates recognised the need for balance between the individual's rights to privacy and protection and the wider rights of society to freedom of information. Some perceptive candidates also considered the issue of who was, or should be, responsible for censorship. In contrast, weaker candidates assumed censorship only applied to children and involved the watershed on television or the classification of films. The most common examples featured paparazzi photographs of the members of the Royal Family or the phone hacking scandals involving the collapse of *The News of the World*, without much understanding of the sensitive issues involved.

### Question 4

The essay proved to be an unpopular choice but produced some good answers involving the careers of popular musicians; writers, actors and fine artists were less popular choices. Sadly, the most general approach was to provide copious material about the life and achievements of a chosen artist without detailed knowledge of their style and the way that it developed or changed. When this material was linked to reasons for change prompted by milestones in an artist's career, the result was usually an essay of high quality.

### Question 5

- ai) Most had some idea of the meaning of *demean* and related it to the patronising attitude of the young towards the elderly.

- aii) Misunderstanding of the term *demographic* meant that some answers were confused. A popular interpretation was that it was to do with different sorts of work.
- bi) Candidates were aware that the passing of skills between generations would lead to a more effective workforce, or that the fact that more older people were working would relieve pressure on the welfare system and thus benefit the economy as a whole.
- bii) Many of the suggestions for attracting the ageing population to work involved paying more money (with little thought to the practicalities of this) or removing their retirement pensions. Some candidates resorted to frivolous ideas, like providing tea and biscuits every hour! However, sensible suggestions included improved mobility and access provision, such as more lifts or parking spaces, or offering health benefits. Shorter working hours which would enable older people to combine work with childcare or the possibility of doing charity work were also proposed.
- c) This was an open-ended question that offered the opportunity to think creatively and practically in order to solve a problem. Two issues needed consideration: **education should be life-long** and **knowledge needs updating**. These two key elements were the starting point in the process of organising an event that would benefit the old and the young and hopefully bring them closer together. The difficulty in selecting an event that would suitably promote co-operation between retired and young people proved to be the biggest hurdle. A number opted for a *day* or a *work fayre* in which activities involving the young and the old in *skills and experience* would take place. Many candidates failed to provide a detailed description of the event or the significance or point of the activities. The question needed to be unpicked and specific reference to the three factors: **supporting each other, sharing experiences**, and **passing on skills**. Some totally implausible activities involved bouncy castles, rock climbing, playing board games and knitting.

### Question 6

Though this emerged as an unpopular choice of question it did result in the writing of some impressive, informed and detailed essays. Candidates were able to understand the workings of government and to combine this with specific examples from past politicians or, in many cases, to use current government policies to illustrate and support their arguments. For example: confrontation was exemplified by Margaret Thatcher's dealings with the unions or Tony Blair's decisions regarding the Iraq war whilst compromises included the Coalition's policies on Europe, welfare benefits, and single-sex marriage. The key terms were **confrontation** and **compromise**. When these words were fully understood and exemplified the outcome was invariably one that deserved a high mark level.

### Question 7

This proved to be an almost universally popular question, possibly because it linked closely with many candidates' personal experience. It was important to state at the beginning of an essay what a healthy work-life balance consisted of. When ignoring this and simply stating an advantage and disadvantage, answers invariably lacked shape and definition. Well-developed arguments focused on the health or general happiness that a balance brought, although a general weakness was a lack of support and analysis of these views. Similarly, a common disadvantage cited was lower productivity resulting from a disinclination to work. Stated plainly and without some framework such assertions lacked credibility and strength. The apathy and laziness caused by a too relaxed lifestyle was accompanied by the slippery-slope of poverty, obesity, crime, and finally, death. The best essays spent time considering what constituted a healthy work-life balance and how it would differ from person to person. The disadvantages of an imbalance generally involved reference to public service personnel such as doctors, firemen, soldiers and (even) teachers who work long, anti-social hours.

### Question 8

A wide range of voluntary organisations was considered, including Oxfam, Greenpeace, the Scouting movement and the R.S.P.C.A, while some chose more generic groups such as charity shops or hospital volunteers. The work of these organisations was not always clearly understood and consequently the discussion of tension and harmony was basic and lacking real detail.



When candidates could refer to a personal involvement or connection with a voluntary organisation, a much better developed and supported answer emerged. Examiners were prepared to accept responses that referred to tension and harmony in general terms, even though the implicit suggestion was that there should be consideration of the states in both organisations separately.

## F732 The Scientific Domain

### General Comments

The overall performance of candidates, including the quality of their written communication, was very good. It was clear that time in the examination had been used well, with many responses to Section B providing evidence of this.

The course content of this unit involves the use of mathematical skills which are included in GCSE courses. In Section A, some questions required an understanding and an explanation of number patterns. Candidates who found these patterns did not always ensure they supported their answers well enough with an example or an explanation.

In Section B, examiners noted the use of clear communication skills and good vocabulary, especially when examples and personal experience were included. Large numbers of candidates were able to demonstrate a range of knowledge learned from their General Studies course, from other AS courses, and from their own personal life experience.

It was particularly pleasing to see fewer rubric errors. However, as has been highlighted in previous reports, there were instances where candidates had not taken into account the key words of their chosen essay question. In Question 3 some responses described advantages rather than disadvantages; in Question 4, **two** areas needed to be chosen and an argument presented favouring one over the other. A few candidates failed to make this choice and proceeded to describe both areas. Finally, in Question 5, the stem of the question referred to both space **and** the earth, however some answers only referred to only one of these areas.

In general, introductions to essays appeared to have improved. Some showed a clearly defined thought process as a prelude to the main body of the essay. Some others were too lengthy or simply repeated the question.

Assessment Objective 4 (Communication) is assessed throughout the paper and attention must be paid to the presentation, style and coherence of essays, particularly in Section B. Only a small number of responses displayed poor handwriting skills.

### Section A

#### Question 1

The theme of this question was the understanding of sampling techniques and accuracy in scientific investigations.

- (a) It became evident that candidates had been taught and had learned different sampling techniques, as the words *random*, *systematic* and *stratified* were often given. Some explanations were very clear: for example, *allocate a number to each student and then use a random number generator to find the sample*. Even though this is a concise answer, it shows the method very clearly. At times the explanation of *systematic* and *stratified* was confused by quoting one method then describing the other. *Volunteer* and *opportunity* sampling were also offered, but some candidates failed to expand on these methods and give a clear meaning. In weaker responses candidates offered a sample source, for example race and gender, but failed to link these to a particular sampling method.
- bi) Most candidates gained full marks, with only a minority being awarded 1 mark as they had incorrectly subtracted or halved. Despite these being fairly basic skills there is still a fundamental requirement to display accuracy.
- bii) Full marks were not awarded when an answer was not given to one decimal place (a key requirement of the question) or was incorrectly rounded to 36.6. A few candidates, presumably without calculators, tried unsuccessfully to work out  $5/9$  and rounded it to 0.5, resulting in an incorrect final answer.

- biii) There were some very good answers to this part of the question which included reference health and safety aspect in scientific investigations, in particular in a laboratory or in the measuring of medicines. It was also suggested that the estimated measurements and answers may be used in subsequent investigations, possibly by other scientists, and would produce even more inaccuracies. A few candidates recognised that the use of what appears to be a small amount of rounding off might lead to a much larger percentage error in the end result, particularly for very small doses of medicine or titration components. In weaker responses there was much repetition, comments on unreliable and invalid results, and rewriting of the question. Communication was rewarded in parts 1a) and 1biii); poorly explained techniques received fewer marks.

## Question 2

This question involved the understanding and explanation of number patterns.

- (a) Many different patterns emerged, for example:

- the final answer is a multiple of three
- the numbers go up in consecutive order
- there is always one more number to be added on one side of the equation
- the first number in each row is a square number.

These were valid patterns but, as the question asked the candidate to *identify and explain*, full marks could only be awarded if there was support from the diagram. For example, the inclusion of the numbers 3, 15, 42 and 90 in respect of the first bullet point above, or 1, 4, 9 and 16 for the final bullet point. Some weaker responses did not identify where pattern was situated on the diagram and made general comments, for example *the numbers go up in order* or *down the lines the numbers get bigger*.

- bi) It was very important that candidates understood the stem of the question, regarding where and how the bee could move. Most answers were correct, in particular to cells 3 and 4. A common incorrect answer to cell 5 was 7, but some credit was awarded to candidates who had included some working out, providing a list of routes which could be checked.
- bii) The pattern being looked at included cells 1 and 2. Many candidates only worked on the numbers they had found from question 2bi) and consequently lost marks. The idea of a prediction is for the candidate to explain how they managed to arrive at their answer.

In cases where a candidate had not gained full marks in question 2bi) it was possible to award some credit if they explained a pattern they had found using their previous incorrect answers.

Good responses originated where there was recognition of the pattern of adding together the previous set of routes, an explanation of the pattern, and some examples such as  $1 + 2 = 3$  followed by  $3 + 5 = 8$ ; therefore the number of routes would be  $5 + 8 = 13$ . References to the Fibonacci sequence provided a good prediction and explanation.

## Section B

### Question 3

The list given in the stem of the question served as a guide, and it was pleasing to read disadvantages of other sources, for example tidal barriers and hydro-electric power, as well as the inclusion of the example of the dam on the River Yangtze. This revealed many issues regarding loss of habitats for both wildlife and people.

Very good responses were seen where candidates wrote about a whole group of resources and examples in sequence rather than simply presenting one disadvantage after another from the list given. Excellent knowledge was shown as well as very good development of key points. Most candidates identified problems with wind and solar resources, often giving specific examples of regions. The disadvantage that these resources require machinery which may have been constructed and transported using fossil fuels proved an interesting proposition. The most popular disadvantages were visual and noise pollution, efficiency in terms of how much energy

we could get from these resources, reliability, and the excessive amount of space used for their development. Inevitably, costs were applied to every resource and it was often revealed that machinery had to be repaired and that in itself was a disadvantage, especially in the case of wind turbines at sea.

Weaker responses merely listed disadvantages, often with very little development other than a mention of monetary cost. By pursuing the notion of economic restrictions and investment and job losses there was a loss of focus on the scientific domain and a clear drift into the social domain.

#### **Question 4**

Overall, candidates showed an insight into many areas of health, with some very thought provoking ideas. Mental health issues were more prominent than either obesity or drugs and alcohol. Weaker candidates who tried to prioritise the ageing population did not always make their case clear and simply produced answers saying that we all have to die sometime. However, when it was suggested that (for example) the ageing population could inspire the youth of today, or that research into medicines for Alzheimer's, if funded more, might provide answers for mental health issues, the essay gained strength and credibility.

Obesity as a priority was supported by the idea that it was a global problem and, where there was no understanding of a healthy diet within the family, was not always a child's fault. The fact that we need to complete further research into this area, as it might be a genetic problem that was causing the obesity, was often stated. Diabetes and the possibility of heart attacks were cited as reasons for further funding, and examples presented showed that many candidates had experience of someone in their family with similar problems. The inclusion of BMI and a definition of obesity were the ingredients of a good essay.

Arguments against funding obesity consisted largely of generalised comments about lifestyle, and comments such as *it's their own fault* or *it is self-inflicted*. A suggestion that it was not the role of science to explore obesity, as there were plenty of healthy eating campaigns and clubs to attend to lose weight, proved a controversial viewpoint that was both dismissive and assertive. At times there was little sympathy for funding in this area, and comments on more education being available for obese people were common.

Where drugs and alcohol had been chosen as a priority it was clear that candidates had received some formative education. Responses became very descriptive and often referred to self-infliction. Some referred to the fact that further funding might also help in terms of mental health issues as withdrawal from drugs and alcohol was difficult. Funding in this area would be successful as these problems reached a wide range of people, probably more so than other areas.

Overall there was immense support for prioritising mental health issues. Candidates focused on this as a priority, were very knowledgeable and provided insightful ideas as to why it was their preferred choice. Excellent answers included points referring to the fact that mental conditions were invariably not self-inflicted and that it was likely that a traumatic event had caused the problem, or that it might be hereditary. It was suggested that further research in this area would expand our knowledge about the human mind and the drugs involved in treating these illnesses. An inspiring quotation was: *this is the invisible problem*, which led to discussion of how difficult it is for sufferers to cope with their condition and seek help from Agencies, and how nobody might notice the problems a person has until something dramatic or traumatic happens to them. The family of the sufferer became a focal point and it was suggested that funding might help to educate them in being able to provide more effective support.

### Question 5

Very good answers included as benefits new strains of crops or seeds which might be grown in space and used for experiments. The international space station was a very popular example and some candidates explained that growing food in space would mean the possibility of planning longer space journeys and provide the astronauts with a better diet than dried foods. This type of production might result in longer expeditions into deep space. A thoughtful response raised the possibility of using the findings from these growing conditions to help us on earth to provide food in harsh conditions such as deserts. Additionally, experimentation with GM foods and growing conditions might reduce damage to crops by pests and diseases. It was common to read about the idea of more land being available on earth to use for other purposes, possibly for housing and different types of farming. In some weaker essays, it was suggested that this new food source from space might be transported back to earth resulting in more jobs being created. The question asked for benefits to the earth **and** in space. Candidates who simply offered benefits in one area failed to answer the question fully and so restricted their marks. There were some frivolous explanations where candidates mentioned feeding aliens on different planets. Although it might be creditworthy to suggest the humans might inhabit other planets in the distant future if we could grow food in space, this notion was one step too far.

## **F733 Domain Exploration: Applying Synoptic Skills**

### **General Comments**

The overwhelming majority of candidates showed a very secure engagement with this paper and submitted complete scripts, although it seemed apparent that a smaller proportion of the entry had received the level of focused teaching for the examination that has been previously noted. That said, examiners noted that most candidates responded appropriately to the variety of demands posed by the paper. In Section A the short-answer questions often received the required concise treatment. Section B essays covered a wide range of responses, both in terms of attainment and presentation.

Examiners noted the further decline of punctuation, with few candidates able to use any other form of punctuation other than full stops and commas. It was evident that only those candidates who had taken the time to plan their essays were able to use paragraphs appropriately. The same is true of candidates' handwriting, which continues to decline, with a small number of scripts being illegible to the extent that candidate response could not be fully read. Some candidates are obviously accustomed to present their work in word-processed form: centres would support them by offering opportunities to produce handwritten work, in timed conditions, in preparation for the examination.

Overall, it was pleasing to note that candidates had often answered questions with relish and commitment, adducing relevant personal experience effectively. Many of them also deployed subject knowledge from their other Advanced Level studies as well as from intelligent engagement with printed and electronic media.

### **Question 1**

This question proved accessible to many. Most were able to identify positive and negative consequences for each of the developments and this, together with secure communication, was enough to gain up to half marks. Higher marks were obtained only by those who offered intelligent development and appropriate illustration (or both). Centres would help their candidates enormously by giving them practice in reading Section A questions in order to ascertain the skills that are being tested in this section.

### **Question 2**

Most candidates identified the tension between news values and profit and gained up to half marks in so doing. Development here consisted of illustrations and examples, with better candidates referring to celebrity culture, the recent phone-hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry, parliamentary expenses, Stephen Lawrence and Operation Yewtree. What was encouraging about answers to this question was the evident engagement of candidates with news media, allied to an entirely healthy cynicism about their values.

### **Question 3**

The specification requires candidates to be able to 'recognise common fallacies' and that 'candidates are assessed on their ability to recognise common fallacies, to use deductive and inductive arguments and arguments drawn from analogy, cause and authority' (see page 18). Many candidates had no understanding of a fallacy. Resourceful candidates made more or less successful attempts at describing, from first principles, the fallacies of begging the question, post hoc propter hoc, and argumentum ad populum. Some candidates had been taught the content of the specification and therefore had the knowledge and understanding of what a fallacy is and were able to answer the question set appropriately.

#### Question 4

Better answers engaged with the underlying themes of authenticity in art and the interface between freedom of speech and the law. Weaker candidates stuck to re-phrasing the source and adding more or less simple comment. The majority combined these approaches and it was encouraging that most candidates used only the information in the source.

#### Question 5

Answers to this question covered a wide ability range. Minorities examined included Muslims, immigrants, travellers, Afro Caribbean citizens, the elderly, homosexuals, bisexuals and transgendered persons. Candidates showed considered personal knowledge and shrewd analytical skills, as well as a lively appreciation of the difference between rights, needs and wishes. The question was designed to encourage candidates to write a balanced answer, and it was good to see that many of them did just that.

#### Question 6

This question was the most popular, and appeared to offer candidates an opportunity to gain marks by judicious recycling of their personal experience. Indeed it was possible to gain limited or barely adequate credit by doing just this. Higher marks were accessible to those candidates who recognised the thrust of the question - a version of the French proverb *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (the more things change, the more they stay the same). The apparent simplicity of the question concealed from some its actual depth, and for this reason it differentiated between candidates very effectively. To gain high marks candidates needed to see, and to illustrate, the truism that human needs and wishes, and our means of satisfying them, have remained roughly the same throughout recorded time. What has changed is the toolbox we use to satisfy our needs, and our expectations of the implements in that toolbox.

Candidates needed to be able to demonstrate their realisation that the gramophone and the iPod fulfil an exactly similar function (music on demand), as do the Boeing 767 and the stage coach (movement, without personal exertion, from A to B). More able candidates discerned this theme and wrote of how their family life had changed in appearance but not in actuality, illustrating this idea with a variety of examples of change and stasis. At the same time, less able candidates could engage with their simpler reading of the theme and write an interesting, and engaging answer.

#### Question 7

This was the least popular question. Some candidates dealt capably with the metaphor of rice (short-term), trees (medium-term) and girls (long-term). Good answers often diagnosed the increasing complexity of the tasks of satisfying hunger (rice), creating a more or less complex infrastructure (trees) and re-modelling society on an egalitarian/feminist model (girls). Less able candidates picked on the reference to education and girls and wrote feminist tracts. The weaker candidates had come to the examination equipped with information about LEDC and MEDC models and saw this question as their chance to unload it, irrespective of its relevance.

# F734 Culture, Science and Society: Making Connections

## General Comments

It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination and displayed a mature approach to the answering of questions. Essays that were awarded the higher marks were most often those where there was evidence of planning and a clear structure. This provided a basis for demonstrating clarity of thinking, and the presentation of cogent, engaging viewpoints. Another positive, key element was the inclusion of an introduction that showed an understanding of the question and a conclusion that offered a preferred viewpoint.

Each question asks candidates to consider the source material and combine this with their own knowledge and personal experience to construct an answer. Examiners noted a number of instances where weaker candidates copied or paraphrased the given material and attempted to suggest it was their own original idea. The source material is intended as a starting point, an example to prompt discussion, and not as a substitute for a candidate's own thoughts. The inclusion of *personal experience* remains variable. This can be interpreted broadly: something that has been read, something that has been seen (in real life or on television), something that has been discussed at home or school or a real-life experience of the candidate. The inclusion of these items can only enhance the quality of an essay and provide a way of accessing the higher mark levels.

If there are two parts to a question, both must be addressed. Too often the second part was consigned to simple, unqualified assertions at the end of an essay. On occasions, the second part was tackled first, to the detriment of the first part which was given limited space or completely omitted. It is important that candidates demonstrate a sense of balance and evenness when tackling question that are multi-faceted or contain several premises that need to be explored.

Examiners continue to have concern about candidates' standard of English language. Basic errors are often seen in spelling and grammar which should have been mastered by candidates at A2 Level; for example spelling incorrectly key words that are printed in the question paper. Punctuation and paragraphing are further examples of areas in need of attention to avoid the problem of examiners encountering difficulties in understanding ideas and arguments. Homophone errors, such as the interchanging of 'affect' and 'effect', 'are' and 'our', 'do not assist in the comprehension of scripts. Additionally there seems to be a gradually increasing inclusion of vernacular language. While the examination is not a test of written English, it is important to maintain the integrity and formality of a public examination by presenting answers in clear, conventional written form. Handwriting remains a concern. Whilst it is acknowledged that handwriting may become less legible as it speeds up, there can be no substitute for practising handwriting at speed.

## Question 1

There were three sources covering aspects of energy, choice and usage. The first was an extract about the centenary of the death of Rudolf Diesel; the second was a picture of a house with solar panels; the third was a headline questioning whether wind farms would lower energy bills. The question dealt with two ideas: the impact of culture, science and society on our choice and use of energy and the extent to which this choice and use might change in the future.



Stronger answers were able to offer an informed, focused and thoughtful response which used the sources as a springboard. Weaker answers either followed the source material too literally or were side-tracked into offering a response which described the features of either global warming or climate change without any analysis and discussion. These answers tended to be very general and lacking in depth. When considering the cultural domain, candidates were able to identify a number of issues. The most common was '*nimbyism*' when discussing the siting of wind farms or the positioning of solar panels. Other common cultural issues related to the demands of modern lifestyles and religious views on stewardship of the earth. Often underpinning a good answer was the underlying theme of the changing use of energy in general terms. The scientific domain offered the opportunity to consider a wide range of methods to create energy. While a number of essays concentrated on the use of finite resources and options proposed by the source, others made good reference to bio-fuels, tidal and hydroelectric power, and nuclear options. A few good answers were able to discuss the potential of nuclear fusion or the use of hydrogen in the future, though it was disappointing to note that a number of candidates thought that diesel fuel was a relatively new discovery and that energy and electricity were one of the same thing.

A common theme in the Social Domain was cost. Some candidates were able to recognise the dilemma between affording the installation of alternative energy equipment and 'start-up' costs, in relation to the long term gains of reduced energy bills. The development of ideas was variable, with weaker candidates assuming that only the rich could afford this investment while others discussed local council schemes that gave tenants the advantage of free electricity while the council gained income from the feed-in tariff. Reference to 'extent' was frequently consigned to a final paragraph, though better candidates would consider this throughout an essay by considering each domain in turn.

Stronger candidates fully engaged with the question by discussing each domain, adding personal experience and giving a considered analysis of the dilemmas associated with the future and probable changes in energy use. In these scripts, candidates developed their own knowledge substantially with reference to the sources, but also provided rich detail concerning energy choice issues. It was generally recognised that individuals are more likely to be persuaded on the grounds of economy than by the greater good for the environment, and that global efforts will depend on co-operation between the biggest polluting nations as well as on continued scientific development of the efficiency of renewable energy.

## **Question 2**

This question required candidates to consider the issues which affected the delivery of free healthcare to all and to consider the extent that the NHS is still able to fulfil its original aims. There were two sources to consider. The first gave background information about the original concept and aims of the NHS while the second offered a list of common criticisms. Some candidates worked through the question logically, addressing each of the three domains and then discussing the extent to which the future delivery of free healthcare might be possible at the point of delivery. Others, usually the weaker ones, mixed ideas illogically and lost focus on the question. When discussing cultural issues, candidates looked at changes that had taken place since 1948, while others developed ideas concerning rushing to doctors' surgeries or to a hospital for immediate treatment. Some interesting discussions were presented comparing the NHS in to other countries, most commonly the USA.

Scientific issues covered technology and medicine and how these can assist in improving diagnosis. Examples such as MRI, CAT scanning and X-ray were common. The increasing number of self-inflicted ailments, largely focusing on smoking, drinking, drugs and obesity, provided interesting subjects for analysis, as did the dilemmas faced in cosmetic surgery. Other interesting considerations included the post code lottery in relation to health provision, concerns about self-diagnosis using the internet, and the links between improvements in medical technology and medicines and the consequent strain on public funding. Weaker candidates talked about having to pay for prescriptions, while others discussed the quality of care for

diabetics or those with cystic fibrosis, who received state care at no cost to themselves. The issue of social benefits proved emotive. Though candidates recognised that improvements in health care had led to people now living longer, a significant number thought that the elderly paid no tax. Good answers discussed how funding was distributed and considered how bureaucracy affected the service though the working of the UK taxation system was not generally understood. A common assumption was that people could opt out of paying tax towards the NHS if they chose private care.

In respect of candidates' personal experience, there was a tendency to include too much detail about personal ailments, though in exceptional cases there was pertinent use of real-life experiences to support or negate the concepts of good quality healthcare. Once again, the consideration of the extent to which the NHS could continue to fulfil its original aims was often left to a closing paragraph. However some candidates engaged in thoughtful discussion which considered the differing attitudes of successive governments and suggested some interesting solutions to perennial problems. These answers presented a refreshing contrast to simplistic solutions which concluded that the only way to ensure the aims of the NHS were met was to pour even more money into the service.

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
**1 Hills Road**  
**Cambridge**  
**CB1 2EU**

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

**Education and Learning**

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)**

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**Head office**  
**Telephone: 01223 552552**  
**Facsimile: 01223 552553**

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