

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/11
Written Examination

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they read the paper carefully, looking at the key words, to answer the questions set. This was particularly relevant in **Question 2** where many candidates evaluated the argument rather than the evidence as required in the question. This has been highlighted in previous reports.
- Candidates should avoid formulaic approaches to answering **Questions 2** and **3**. Instead, they could be encouraged to read and evaluate the documents carefully rather than making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument. Candidates are required to engage critically with the documents, rather than make generalised comments that could apply to any document.
- The length of the answer should reflect the number of marks available. Several candidates spent too long on **Question 1** leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Questions 2** and **3** which were worth 80% of the available marks.
- Brief and relevant reference to the documents should be used to support evaluation of evidence and argument. Otherwise, the answer is generalised containing no more than a series of assertions or claims. This is crucial in **Questions 2** and **3** to attain higher marks.
- Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without reference, except in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit. This is particularly relevant in **Question 2** where many candidates copied out statistics or examples without reflecting on their strengths or weaknesses.

General comments

- There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the documents and many showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. In this series there was a larger number of candidates who did not pay careful enough attention to the command words in the questions and this limited the level they achieved. This was particularly true in **Question 2** where many candidates evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the argument rather than the evidence.
- It is encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the argument put forward in the documents in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement. However, many simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation or judgement.
- There were few candidates who ran out of time, although the allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. There were several candidates who wrote extensively on **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)** whereas a few lines would have been sufficient. In some cases, this had a detrimental impact on **Question 3**.
- As a result, some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise references to the documents. **Question 3** required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content to evaluate the sources, evidence, perspectives and arguments to reach an overall judgment regarding which, if any, was stronger. Candidates could be advised to provide brief and relevant references from the documents to support their evaluation of evidence and argument otherwise the answer is generalised, containing only assertions or claims. They could also explain what impact this has on the argument or chosen evidence, which goes beyond a generic statement like “weakens/strengthens”.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Only **brief** statements were required. For “identify questions” information could be copied directly from the text. The key words in the question were “examples” and “being developed”. Candidates should be encouraged to carefully read the passages and questions to be able to identify the correct information perhaps by highlighting key words. Some, incorrectly, used general statements like “nursing care robots”, or those that had already been developed like “baby seal robot”.

Typically, candidates could achieve the two available marks by stating: “a device to help carry the elderly” and “a mobile flush lavatory”. There were other possible answers to choose from and no need to write extensively.

- (b) The question required the candidates to explain two benefits in using communication robots. The key focus of the question was on communication robots which are clearly identifiable in the document. Those scoring full marks achieved this by explaining what the benefit is and then referencing how or why it is a benefit. This could be done in two or three sentences in a concise paragraph. While a basic explanation allowed candidates to copy the author’s words from the text, developed explanation required use of their own words or relevant paraphrasing of those of the author.

Many candidates simply copied out the implied reasoning that the author had used but this did not explain the benefits claimed by the author so could score a maximum of 2 marks.

An example of a 4-mark answer:

“The first benefit with using a communication robot is the positive psychological effect (what) it brings. The robot brings smiles to the faces of the senior residents of the Fuyouen Senior Citizens’ Home by dancing and singing with them.” (how)

“Another benefit of using the robot is it keeps the senior residents’ brains active (what – taken from reference to learning) by playing games and quizzes with them. (how) It helps challenge their minds continuously.”

An example of a 2-mark answer:

“Two benefits in using communication robots as provided by the author of Document 1 are “positive psychological effects” (what) on nursing home residents as well as expanding the care that is provided by the nursing homes they reside in.” (what)

Question 2

It was important in **Question 2** to read the requirements of the question carefully. The highest scoring candidates addressed strengths and weaknesses of the **evidence** and related this to the author’s overall argument about using robotic equipment in healthcare. However, many candidates did not recognise the need to focus on the evidence used and instead evaluated the strength and weakness of the argument. Although these candidates used some evidence in their answer, frequently the emphasis of the answer was towards argument so, for many, higher level marks were not able to be achieved. Another common occurrence was to address the strengths of the evidence but to then digress to weakness of argument.

This issue has been frequently identified in reports for previous series and remains an area for improvement. Candidates could be encouraged to assess the credibility of the source of the evidence and whether it is cited by the author. Reasoning as to why the Japanese Government is a reliable source rather than simply stating it is, would enhance the analysis of strengths. Statistical evidence could be assessed in terms of its accuracy and relevance reflecting strength or weakness.

For strengths of the evidence high scoring candidates used examples like: *“The writer uses a quote ‘We aim to offer cheap robots widely costing between ¥100,00 and ¥200,000...We aim to achieve a situation where every senior citizen’s home will have at least one robot.’ This quote comes from a deputy director of METI giving the author a source of credibility and reliability. By using a quote from someone who works with and towards the author’s proposed solution to the shortage of caregivers, it’s easy to be convinced.”* The candidate identified the evidence through a quote from the document and its source and used it to support

the author's argument. Further development relating to why METI is a reliable source would have enhanced the answer.

For weaknesses of the evidence, high scoring candidates used examples like: *"A piece of evidence that is weakening the author's claim that robots should be expanded across healthcare is evidence coming from the Fuyouen Senior Citizens' Home in Yokohama, Japan. The reviews of the robots have been 'very positive', but sadly this is only the opinion of one senior citizens' home not all across Japan. The testimony from the home's caregivers of a 'positive psychological effect' may not be generalisable to something all home caregivers experience."* This showed a good understanding of the limitations of the sources of the evidence and implied a lack of reliability.

There appeared, in many cases, to be an expectation that the question would refer to the strength and weaknesses of the argument and a formulaic approach adopted. Explanation of such aspects as: the credibility of the author, the range of arguments and the use of language, were erroneously used in this context. However, many candidates were able, even in the context of evaluating argument, to identify the strength of evidence used.

Question 3

The standard of responses to this question overall, showed an improvement on previous series as the approach now seems to be more familiar to the candidates.

There were two main approaches used to answer this question.

The first was to discuss the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempt to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgment as to which was the most convincing. This approach, for many, was only partially successful as the more difficult evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope. This approach also encouraged candidates to give much narrative description, extensively quoting from what the authors **stated** rather than undertaking evaluation of the convincing nature of the argument. This limited the marks gained.

An example of stating information and simply comparing information from the document without development is:

*"The author of **Document 1** does not address the opposing side of the argument; therefore, it is not well balanced. However, in **Document 2** the author does address the opposing side as well as listing the benefits."*

This does not show evaluation of the arguments; it just shows the differences between the approaches. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to use evidence/details from the documents to evaluate why the authors have come to make those statements.

The second, by far most frequent approach, was to directly compare the two documents throughout the answer. The best candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each approach. There was no correct answer and candidates could, and did, argue that Document 1 or Document 2 were more convincing or that both were equally so. Those scoring lower marks tended to directly compare the content of the passages without evaluating relative strengths. Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. The higher scoring candidates gave clear examples from the documents while lower scorers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without referencing examples. Other lower scoring answers were frequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text. For example, "The author stated..." was frequently followed by simply the author's words without any attempt to evaluate.

Some candidates evaluated the theme of the argument in terms of their own opinion of robots. This is not appropriate as the question requires evaluation of the **authors'** arguments.

The higher scoring candidates used the second method as they could methodically evaluate the relative strengths of the argument, using appropriate examples, before coming to a reasoned judgment at the end.

"The author of Document 2 is a university lecturer in law, with a doctorate, writing for a computer and law website. This gives the author credibility and expertise on the subjects as well as a vested interest to provide truthful and accurate information to retain her reputation. In contrast, the author of Document 1 is a journalist

writing for the Japanese Times, that while respected, means the author has a vested interest to sell copies and gain readers. This means they may include the interesting information rather than the detail and accurate information provided by the author of Document 2”

This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the authors, the provenance of the documents and a quality judgement. Many candidates automatically dismissed the credibility of the journalist in Document 1 relative to the Lecturer in Document 2 without any reasoning. Also, several incorrectly saw the author of Document 2 as a medical doctor rather than a Ph.D.

“The argument in Document 2 is more convincing as it contains a counter-argument. Document 2 states that ‘robotic mobility aids and emotional/psychological aids are successful. However, Easton argues that ‘we need to look at the legal and ethical issues’ relating to the use of robotics in health care. She realises that robotics can assist in certain aspects but can’t completely replace humans and leading to concerns if things go wrong. Document 1, however, does not reference a counter-argument simply stating the benefits of robots. This makes Easton’s argument more convincing gaining more trust in her audience.”

This gives a clear evaluation of the difference in the strength of support for the arguments in the documents.

Overall, some candidates seemed to be looking for a “model” approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the passages clearly. Some candidates used critical thinking terminology in this context which if applied and explained well enhanced the evaluation. However, several used critical thinking statements that were not related to the documents in this paper nor clearly explained.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/12
Written Examination

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they read the paper carefully, looking at and perhaps highlighting the key words, in order to answer the questions set.
- The length of the answer should reflect the number of marks available. Several candidates spent too long on **Question 1** and **2** leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3** which was worth almost half of the available marks.
- The key skill, particularly in **Question 3**, needed to score high marks is that of comparative evaluation, supported by precise reference to the passage and in relation to the question set.
- **Question 3** required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content. This was to evaluate the provenance, perspectives and argument to reach an overall judgment regarding the relative convincing nature of the author's argument in Document 2 relative to Document 1. The highest scoring responses reached a supported judgement.
- Brief and relevant reference to the documents should be used to support evaluation of evidence and argument otherwise the answer is generalised containing no more than a series of assertions or claims. This is crucial in **Questions 2** and **3** to attain higher marks.
- Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without reference, except in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit.

General comments

- The overall standard of the responses was encouraging with candidates seemingly better prepared than in previous series. There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the passages and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions.
- In **Question 1(a)** candidates were asked to identify ways in which educated women bring about change in society not how education in general allowed changes. In **Question 2** several candidates assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument but did not restrict themselves to women being deprived of education in Pakistan, instead using a more global viewpoint. It is important to carefully read, and understand, the questions perhaps by highlighting the key words.
- It is encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the argument put forward in the passages in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement. However, many simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the argument of the authors. Stronger answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner.
- There were few candidates who ran out of time, although the allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. There were several candidates who wrote extensively on **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)** whereas a concise answer in a few lines would have been sufficient. This sometimes had a detrimental impact on **Question 3** as the time remaining was limited. As a result, some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise reference to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents demonstrating that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being considered.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Only **brief** statements were required. For “identify questions” information could be copied directly from the text. The key words in the question were “educated women” and “bring about change in society”. Candidates should be encouraged to carefully read the passages and questions to be able to identify the correct information.

Typically, candidates could achieve the two available marks by stating: “Educated women can become more involved in the economy” and “Educated women become more involved in political processes.” There was no need to write extensively with both points being made in the same sentence. Several candidates looked at education in general by incorrectly identifying such ways as “breaking the cycle of oppression” or “being more aware of their rights”.

- (b) The question required the candidates to identify and explain two barriers to girls’ education in Pakistan. Those scoring full marks frequently achieved this by combining the identification and explanation of each reason into one or two sentences in a concise paragraph. While identification allows candidates to copy the author’s words from the text, the explanation requires use of their own words or relevant paraphrasing of those of the author.

Many candidates simply copied out the reasoning that the author had used but this did not explain the different approaches and was not credited.

Examples of good practice: *“In Pakistan, women face various barriers to their education. The major cause is the population increase. (identify). A family with many children and a low budget will prioritise sending the boys to School while they teach girls practical, homemaking skills.”*
(Explanation – paraphrased).

“Another barrier to education is that they are usually seen as property of the family males and their education is not valued. (Identify) It is believed that women should be taught household tasks such as solutions to domestic problems, home economics and raising children rather than going to School. Also, these decisions are nearly always made by the male responsible for them.”
(Explanation – paraphrased).

There were several other variations that could have been used.

Question 2

It was important in **Question 2** to read the requirements of the question carefully. The highest scoring candidates addressed strengths and weaknesses of the argument about women being deprived of education in Pakistan. However, some candidates looked at the argument in general terms using a formulaic approach to answer a question about argument. For example, the limited scope of the argument was frequently incorrectly referenced as a weakness as it only referred to Pakistan. Candidates could more clearly identify the key words in the question (that refers only to Pakistan) to focus their answer.

For strengths of the argument high scoring candidates used examples that included evidence like: *“The author provides a plethora of statistical evidence in Paragraph 2, firmly backing up her claims that the state of basic education in Pakistan is lacklustre and that women face the greatest burden of this shortcoming. She specifically provides evidence that has been gathered by UNESCO, a globally renowned body for education and social work. This provides reliability to her evidence, making her argument more convincing.”*
This clearly reviewed the source of the evidence used and related it directly to the question posed.

For weaknesses of the argument high scoring candidates used examples like: *“A weakness is the lack of sources provided. Although the author provides a reliable source (UNESCO) she only provides this one source for her statistics meaning that they may not be as accurate and credible”*

This showed a good understanding of the limitations of the sources of the evidence and the consequent lack of reliability.

“Although it is an advantage that the writer is a woman writing in Pakistan she may have experienced the issue herself so that her argument may be biased, making the problem seem worse than it actually is.”

This showed the possible bias of a woman, writing on women's issues in Pakistan.

Question 3

The standard of responses to this question overall, showed an improvement on previous series as the approach now seems to be more familiar to the candidates.

There were two main approaches used to answer this question.

The first was to discuss the argument and solutions of the author of **Document 1** separately from that of **Document 2** and then attempt to synthesise these to come to an overall judgment as to which, if any, is more convincing. This approach, for many, was only partially successful as the more difficult evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in quantity, quality and by time. This approach also encouraged candidates to give much narrative description, particularly, quoting extensively from what the authors **stated** rather than undertaking evaluation of the nature of the argument and solutions. This limited the marks gained.

An example of stating information and simply comparing information from the document without development is:

“Document 1 does give a better explanation. It gives two arguments why girls can't go to School. Document 2 just really talks about how big the problem is but doesn't really explain why this problem exists.”

This does not show evaluation of the arguments; it just shows the differences between the approach. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to use evidence/details from the documents to evaluate why the authors have come to make those statements.

The second approach, and by far most frequent approach, was to directly compare the two documents throughout the answer. The best candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each approach and solution. There was no correct answer and candidates could, and did, argue that Document 1 or Document 2 was more convincing than the other, or both equally convincing. Those scoring lower marks tended to directly compare the content of the passages without evaluating relative strengths.

Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. The higher scoring candidates gave clear examples from the documents while lower scorers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without referencing examples. Other lower scoring answers were frequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text.

Some candidates evaluated the theme of the argument about girls' rights in terms of their own opinion or prior knowledge. This is not appropriate as the question requires evaluation of the authors' arguments not that of the candidate.

The higher scoring candidates used the second method as they could methodically evaluate the relative strengths of the argument and solutions, using appropriate examples, before coming to a reasoned judgment at the end.

*“The author of **Document 2** mentions multiple countries in which a survey was held thus the argument is more generalisable and reliable as it has a larger sample. She mentions: Ecuador, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Zimbabwe and later Canada. So, she focused not just on developing countries but also those that are developed. This demonstrated that throughout these countries women still feel inequality and that the problem is global. Wajiha in **Document 1** did not do this as she concentrated entirely on the issues and solutions in Pakistan.”*

This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the global perspectives of the authors.

“The only source in Document 1 is UNESCO which is very reliable. For Document 2 the only source is PIC. This seems reliable with a large sample size (4200 girls) that make up a survey in PIC's 2015 report. However, the author is a Senior Gender Equality Adviser with PIC and could have chosen to use only the values given to her company that would support her views. This leads to possible vested interest that could make the argument less convincing.”

This gives a clear evaluation of the difference in the approach of the two documents relating to the sources and supporting evidence.

Overall, some candidates seemed to be looking for a “model” approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the passages clearly. This also meant that reference to some form of solution, although supported by a good argument, was not forthcoming. Some candidates used critical thinking terminology in this context which if applied and explained well enhanced the evaluation. However, several used critical thinking statements that were not related to the documents in this paper nor clearly explained.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/13
Written Examination

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they read the paper carefully, looking at the key words, to answer the questions set.
- The length of the answer should reflect the number of marks available. Some candidates spent too long on **Question 1** and **2** leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3**.
- The key skill, particularly in **Question 3**, needed to score high marks, is that of comparative evaluation, supported by precise reference to the passage and in relation to the question set.
- **Question 3** required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content to evaluate the provenance, perspectives and argument to reach an overall judgment regarding which, if any, is more convincing.
- Brief and relevant reference to the documents should be used to support evaluation of evidence and argument otherwise the answer is generalised containing no more than a series of assertions or claims. This is crucial in **Questions 2** and **3** to attain higher marks.

Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without reference, except for identifying in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit.

In **Question 3**, the strongest responses reached a supported judgment about the convincing nature of the two arguments.

General comments

- The overall standard of the responses was encouraging with candidates seemingly better prepared than in previous series. There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the passages and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions.
- It is encouraging to see several candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the argument put forward in the passages in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement. However, several candidates simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the argument of the authors. Stronger answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner.
- There were very few candidates who ran out of time, although the allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. Although most candidates answered **Question 1** concisely there were some who wrote extensively, usually by copying out sections of the document. This sometimes had a detrimental impact on **Question 3** as time was running short.
- Some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise reference to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents demonstrating that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being considered and reached a supported judgment concerning the convincing nature of the documents.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Only **brief** statements were required. For “identify questions” information could be copied directly from the text. The key words in the question were “face the same issues”. Candidates should be encouraged to carefully read the passages and questions to be able to identify the correct information.

Typically, candidates could achieve the two available marks by stating: “NATO and Russia face the same issues such as: maintenance of the global order, the fight against terrorism and the security balance in the world.” Two of these three examples could be chosen with no need to write extensively. A simple sentence or two was sufficient.

- (b) The question required the candidates to identify and explain two future roles for NATO. The key word is “future”. Nearly all candidates were able to identify two of the future roles of NATO. While identification allows candidates to copy the author’s words from the text, the explanation requires use of their own words or relevant paraphrasing of those of the author. Several candidates simply copied out the implied reasoning that the author had used but this did not explain the future roles given by the author.

“NATO needs to defend liberty against threats outside the borders in countries with no tradition of democracy.”

This is a straight copy from the document and gained only one mark for the identification of one future role.

Examples of good practice:

“The author suggests that a major future role for NATO is to defend liberty and security within its borders. (Identify) He explains that the balance of liberty and security must be maintained, especially after the terrorist attacks in Madrid, which is needed to safeguard liberty of its citizens.” (Explanation)

“NATO also needs to make other major powerful countries know the importance of liberty, especially Russia. (Identify) NATO and Russia have common interests; they can cooperate to create a very firm and strong world security system.” (Explanation)

Both statements concisely identify a future role for NATO and then explain it using their own words with some paraphrasing of the author.

Question 2

The question required an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s argument in Document 1.

Higher scoring candidates looked at different factors influencing the relative strength of the argument and collated the strengths and weaknesses together. Aspects that were considered included: the provenance of the document and the credibility of the author; the credibility of sources and strength of evidence; the balance of different perspectives and the use of language.

For strengths of the argument high scoring candidates used examples like: *“The author, Czech Prime Minister, clearly has the authority to speak on the issue as the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999. As a member of NATO, Topolanek is fully informed and has the right to argue its importance through careful consideration and representation of the whole country. This shows great authority, credibility and reliability.”*

This clearly and concisely identified the credibility of the author. Candidates also recognised this as a weakness as the Prime Minister was focused on the success of NATO making his argument potentially biased.

For weaknesses of the evidence high scoring candidates used examples like: *“The author writes that ‘NATO’s main success is the defence of liberty’. However, he shows no examples or any piece of evidence to prove this sentence. As a result, will not find this convincing. Throughout the whole document the author*

only mentions NATO's past success and future goals. Any possible negative effects brought by NATO are ignored... As a result, the credibility of the argument is undermined by the author's biased perspective."

This showed a good understanding of the limitations of the sources of the evidence and the consequent lack of reliability.

Overall, candidates achieved a balanced view between strengths and weaknesses of the argument and used appropriate reference to the document to illustrate their points.

Question 3

The standard of responses to this question overall, showed an improvement on previous series as the approach now seems to be more familiar to the candidates.

There were two main approaches used to answer this question.

The first was to discuss the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempt to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgment as to which was the most convincing. This approach was often only partially successful as the more difficult evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope and limited by time. This approach also encouraged candidates to give much narrative description, extensively quoting from what the authors **stated** rather than undertaking evaluation of the convincing nature of the argument. This limited the marks gained.

An example of stating information and simply comparing information from the document without development is:

"Both articles are by reputable sources as Document 1 is by the Czech Prime Minister and Document 2, a former national intelligence officer. Their ability to see NATO's future are strong as both countries are members of the organisation."

This does not show evaluation of the arguments; it just states the difference between the authors' backgrounds. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to interpret why they were credible sources.

The second approach, and by far most frequent approach, was to directly compare the two documents throughout the answer. The best candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each approach. There was no correct answer and candidates could, and did, argue that **Document 1** or **Document 2** were more convincing or that both were equally so. Those scoring lower marks tended to directly compare the content of the passages without evaluating relative strengths. Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. The higher scoring candidates gave clear examples from the documents while lower scorers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without referencing examples. Other lower scoring answers were frequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text.

Some candidates evaluated the theme of the argument in terms of their own opinion of NATO. This is not appropriate as the question requires evaluation of the authors' arguments not the views of the candidate.

The higher scoring candidates used the second method as they could methodically evaluate the relative strengths of the argument, using appropriate examples, before coming to a reasoned judgment at the end.

"In Document 1, the author stands on the perspective which is in favour of the expansion of NATO. As a result, he does not present any negative effect brought by NATO throughout the whole document. Readers will consider this document and argument given as biased. However, the author of Document 2 analyses the argument about expansion of NATO from two totally opposite perspectives. In paragraph 2 and 4 he explains in detail the opinion held by supporters of NATO expansion that it is beneficial and leads to security in a post-Cold War world. In paragraph 3 the author gives the opposite view that Russia will not like it, not now, not ever."

This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the author's argument in relation to different perspectives.

“Although both documents have some common issues (like they more need more data to back up their arguments to keep it objective and reliable), Document 2 is more convincing than Document 1. The most important reason is that Document 2 is more balanced in its argument. It has contained the opinions from both sides. This really differentiated Document 2 from Document 1 because the arguments must not be biased. Document 2 seems to be less biased from its content, structure, logic and author’s identity.”

This gives an example of a judgement based on previous discussion in the answer.

Overall, some candidates seemed to be looking for a “model” approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the passages clearly. Some candidates used critical thinking terminology in this context which if applied and explained well enhanced the evaluation.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/02
Essay

Key messages

- It is essential that both teachers and candidates are familiar with and fully understand the assessment criteria and syllabus aims.
- The choice of essay question must provide opportunities to develop globally contrasting perspectives and is a critical area requiring teacher support and guidance.
- Sources selected should offer firmly supported judgements or conclusions based on some combination of evidence, reason, argument, experience, authority or opinion with which candidates should fully engage.
- Evaluation of sources and perspectives should form a substantial element of every candidate's essay

General comments

The majority of work seen by examiners was of good quality. Nevertheless, there are indications that some centres have not fully embraced a skills-based approach; specialist subject knowledge is elevated at the expense of deconstruction and reconstruction. This is particularly true when essays submitted appear to have been written for an alternative syllabus. Support and training materials are available to assist with the development of this approach which, to some, may be quite new.

As with any academic essay, planning is key to success and only a minority of submissions displayed significant deficiencies in this respect. Nearly all candidates utilised the permissible word length very well with only a handful of over-length essays submitted. In the interests of fair and equal assessment for all candidates, examiners will only assess essay content within 2000 words which can have a very negative impact when assessing a conclusion which is only considered in part or, in some cases, not at all.

The recommended minimum length of essay is 1750 words. Essays of less than this length were more in evidence than essays which were too long. This limit is not viewed with the same rigour as is the maximum length. However, where essays are substantially shorter, then examiners will find it very difficult to assess certain criteria at the higher levels. For instance, it is highly unlikely that candidates will be able to provide sufficient analysis to indicate that they have a very good or excellent understanding of the arguments and structure of source material (criterion 3) or to develop detailed or full and detailed globally contrasting perspectives (criterion 5).

As previously highlighted, an informed and thoughtful consideration and wording of the essay title or question is the starting point for a successful essay. The best titles are concise and leave little room for confusion as to the candidate's aims. For instance, 'Is globalisation responsible for growing inequality?', or, 'Does overseas development aid benefit the recipients?' offer questions which are clear and enable the candidates to develop globally contrasting perspectives. Conversely, many titles do not serve this purpose as is the case with, 'How can China's overpopulation problem be resolved?' All too often essay titles took the form, 'To what extent does technological development lead to unemployment?' The tendency here is to provide an answer which is descriptive and framed in terms of degree rather than offering any contrast. In a quite different example, a candidate asks, 'Is deforestation the most important issue to climate change or is it just a distraction to other big causes such as burning fossil fuel?' It is difficult to see how this question could be reasonably answered within 2000 words. Finally, 'To what extent do the norms of society affect an individual?' requires a considerable amount of work simply in order to establish what those norms might be. Precision and brevity will help to focus candidates' minds.

Only a minority of candidates appear to understand the centrality of globally contrasting perspectives when planning and writing their essays. Their starting point should be to articulate precisely what these perspectives are and why they are global in character. Arguments and evidence are analysed and evaluated for one perspective and then for the other. Having clearly established the terms and content of the debate, they move on to synthesising the evidence for both perspectives lending them coherence and order explaining the particular strengths or weaknesses within each perspective before offering a comparative evaluation which will lead them to a supported conclusion. Essentially, candidates who follow this process are thinking in terms of perspectives throughout the essay. Without doubt, this process of reconstruction is not an easy one but necessary if candidates are to achieve at a higher level.

Many candidates encountered difficulties in developing globally contrasting perspectives, limiting the opportunity to achieve at higher levels whilst a significant number struggled to develop contrasting perspectives, limiting their achievement to lower levels. Some of the recurring issues which contributed to these difficulties follow:

- Confusion between the meaning of lenses and perspectives. Lenses refer to differing ways of viewing issues. To take the example of immigration, a candidate might choose to view this issue through economic, socio-cultural and political lenses. In providing examples of how immigration has a negative impact when viewed through these lenses, the candidate has not provided evidence of contrasting perspectives. Only if the candidate is able to offer evidence of examples when, for instance, immigration has a positive impact when viewed through the economic lens will they have succeeded in developing contrasting perspectives.
- A number of candidates researched the negative impacts of technological development on unemployment or other issues. Rather than offering evidence of positive impacts, thereby developing contrasting perspectives, some candidates went on to offer suggestions as to how these problems might be alleviated or resolved. Whilst this approach does generate an alternative perspective, it must be understood that it is a complementary rather than contrasting perspective.
- Quite often, candidates will research a topic which is global in character such as gene editing of human embryos. Arguments are then presented both for and against the procedure which are not associated with specific regions or nation states, clearly differentiated as a consequence of levels of economic development or political systems or with differing cultural or religious traditions. This approach fails to engage with differentiated human experience and the perspectives developed, whilst contrasting, are not globally contrasting.
- In a similar way, candidates may research the issue of capital punishment and show some awareness of the requirement for a global dimension. The evidence, examples and arguments are, all too often, based on, for instance, the ongoing debate in the USA. The candidate then provides data published by Amnesty International giving figures for the numbers of executions by country, perhaps including China and Saudi Arabia. Unless these figures are accompanied by some discussion of support for and objections to capital punishment in these countries then the candidate has not developed a global dimension and has succeeded in developing contrasting perspectives only.

Several candidates explored issues which are rather novel including, 'Should we colonise Mars?', and, 'Should Artificial Intelligence be granted civil rights?' Whilst these issues are undoubtedly fascinating and exercising thinkers, they are also theoretical and speculative. First, debates around these issues are, primarily, taking place in advanced, highly developed nations and achieving global contrast is particularly difficult. Second, evidence of impacts or consequences is, inevitably, hypothetical. For these and other reasons, researching these issues is fraught with difficulties.

Plagiarism is a growing problem with increasing reliance on internet-based research and pasting and copying from websites without citation. It is essential that candidates are conversant with citation and referencing conventions and utilise them appropriately. The use of 'spinner' software, designed to confuse plagiarism search tools, has also been noted. This software is rather unsophisticated and easily identified by examiners.

Comments on Specific Criteria

Criterion 1 focuses on communication skills, essay structure and the quality of citations and referencing. Almost universally, candidates are well-versed in essay structure and, on the whole, examiners find essays generally clear in their direction and easy to follow. Candidates commonly achieve at level 3 with a substantial number achieving at level 4 as their command of English is very good and just a small number who reach level 5 by virtue of the quality of expression, use of wide-ranging vocabulary and complex sentence structure. Many candidates could improve their level through quite simple measures including careful proof reading removing common and repetitive errors, the use of 'signposting' to guide the reader through the different stages of the essay and appropriate paragraphing. Whilst the quality of communication

and essay structure is the main determinant of level, examiners take careful note of the quality of citations and referencing which may impact this level positively or negatively. Citations should clearly indicate the source used on that page without ambiguity and then appear in the bibliography. Many candidates use the briefest in-text citation which is inadequate and, quite often, not all citations appear in the bibliography or appear in a bibliography listing many sources which have not been cited. An increasing number of centres are encouraging their candidates to use numbered citations which are translated into full, footnoted citations which are highly effective and has the added advantage that they do not contribute to the overall word count of the essay.

There has been a noticeable increase in the length of many candidates' introductions with very positive results. Whilst candidates must balance the weight given to this with other demands of the essay, a structured introduction which accurately highlights the purpose and aims of the research, the globally contrasting perspectives to be developed in answering the question, definition or explanation of key terms and the candidates' personal standpoint with justification, if appropriate, all contribute to providing a clear framework for both candidate and examiner. Some candidates went further in that they briefly introduced evidence in order to illustrate both the nature of each perspective and the contrast between them which was highly commendable.

Criterion 2 examines the quality of source selection. The majority of candidates had little difficulty in providing contrasting sources and achieving level 3 although candidates who failed to utilise sources with significant contrast inevitably struggled to develop contrasting perspectives. A minority of candidates reached level 4 for the simple reason that the majority only use Western sources. It appears to be the case that candidates find it difficult to move outside this frame and this is an area for development. This is a particular problem for candidates working in Western centres but it is surprising how many candidates in non-Western centres rely entirely on Western sources. Candidates should be striving to research authentic voices representative of a range of regions, cultures, religions, traditions or otherwise as is appropriate for the purposes of their research. It is important to note that examiners may find it difficult to determine the origin of authors and sources with the increasing use of web-based sources and when using sources from international bodies. As such, candidates should be enquiring into these origins in order to justify and emphasise their selection and globally contrasting character

Criterion 3 examines the candidates' understanding of source content as well as evaluating the source across a range of criteria in **equal** measure. Candidates had little difficulty in achieving level 3 for their understanding by way of analysis with a number reaching level 4 and a handful level 5. Many who struggled did so because the sources they selected were entirely descriptive or factual with little to understand by way of argument or because they incorporated lengthy quotations in the absence of meaningful analysis. Whilst quotations are both helpful and necessary for illustrative purposes, examiners are looking for the candidate's voice in order to assess understanding. Evaluation of sources is very mixed. All candidates from many centres do not attempt evaluation and their overall level for this criterion is commonly at level 2, undermining the work that has gone into analysis. Conversely, and less commonly, candidates in other centres place their focus on evaluation and it is quite unclear what the contribution of a particular source is to the perspective it is purportedly supporting. Another problem is that of candidates spending considerable time and effort in outlining the status and achievements of an author in order to label them expert and, therefore, credible which amounts to little more than assertion. The following extract from a candidate's essay on teaching methods is both insightful and concise;

'Donnelly's position within his department and university reveals him as a highly qualified and reliable source of information, but I feel that the study he cites of Shanghai to support his argument is somewhat lacking in transparency, as it provides few details as to how the link was made between Chinese students' high achievement rates and the method of teaching employed in their classrooms. The study has seemingly not accounted for external variables that could have provided an alternative source of influence for these students' test-taking abilities, such as their school or home environments, or the amount of pressure placed on them to do well in school; indeed, it is based purely on empirical data with no insight offered as to why one method is better than the other.'

Criterion 4 is the first of three criteria examining perspectives and their treatment. A significant minority of candidates do not develop globally contrasting perspectives and are, consequently, limited to level 2 for this criterion. Examiners will award credit when perspectives are treated even-handedly and balanced and arrive at a high level 2 which will positively, albeit marginally, impact the overall award. For the majority who do develop global contrast, level 3 is commonly awarded. Achieving level 4, with balanced presentation of perspectives both in terms of content and even-handed treatment displaying some level of empathy, should not be a difficult task whereas outcomes suggest that it is. Whether this is a consequence of a (sub)conscious bias towards one perspective or simply a result of unbalanced research remains an open

question but one to be addressed. Very few candidates achieve level 5 as candidates appear to find it difficult to express an understanding of and justification for views that, perhaps, are far from in accordance with their own standpoint and/or beliefs. Achieving balance and displaying empathy are certainly underdeveloped and simply require appropriate research, presentation and understanding. The following essay extract, included within the conclusion, perfectly highlights a candidate's thoughtful and empathetic response to a highly contentious issues and thoroughly deserving of the highest possible award:

"Admittedly, before I conducted my research, I regarded polygamy as an abstract, alien concept—tinged with moral wrongdoing and tied to harmful religious practices. However, I now recognize polygamy as a complex societal phenomenon, which for many can lead to positive repercussions like the fulfillment of religious duty, potential health benefits, and increased quality of life, especially in countries that have practiced it for thousands of years. I firmly believe that we need to stop shaming those who practice polygamy: to advocate for their equality and acknowledge their basic rights as global citizens."

Criterion 5 assesses the quality of perspectives in terms of detail. To some extent, the level for this criterion is predetermined by the examiner's judgement made for the previous one as contrasting perspectives lacking a developed global dimension are limited to level 2. Again, whilst a significant number of candidates struggle to reach level 3, the majority do so but no further. Many candidates simply fail to provide sufficient evidence or perspectives are based on a single or limited number of arguments. Again, a lack of balance may well indicate that one perspective is rather less detailed than the other. Detail here is also understood to be a measure of the extent of global contrast. Candidates can achieve level 3 with, for instance, a single piece of globally contrasting evidence as opposed to everything else presented and, hence, lacks detail in this respect. Level 5 awards are quite rare and require a range of arguments on both sides of the debate as well as detailed investigation in more than one global setting and, preferably several.

Criterion 6 is undoubtedly the most problematic area for candidates. All too often, candidates present evidence and arguments from a list of sources which contrast and then move into a conclusion which may well take the form, "I believe the strongest arguments support the proposition.....". Put simply, the candidate is not thinking in terms of perspectives and global standpoints. One assumption is that many candidates lack guidance in this area. Alternatively, candidates may be so focussed on amassing evidence from sources that they exhaust the permissible word length without due consideration of perspectives. It is certainly not for me to make such judgements but an issue for Centres to consider as even the strongest, well-considered and researched essays suffer from this deficit. Examiners are looking for synthesis in the 'packaging' of coherent perspectives developed from arguments and evidence which express contrasting worldviews and from which a sustained and supported conclusion can be drawn following analysis and evaluation. Many candidates struggle to reach level 3 notwithstanding the quality of research and other components of the essay. Some candidates do achieve this and more and are well rewarded for their efforts.

Criterion 7 assesses a number of qualities required for an effective conclusion. The majority of candidates achieve at level 3 but a disappointing number fail to reach this level, as achievement at level 3 and higher is not necessarily dependent upon the development of globally contrasting perspectives. The major failing is that these candidates take little or no account of the contrasting perspectives developed and simply opt for the perspective they favour in a single short paragraph. Quite often, these conclusions lack any support, reflection, evaluation or suggestions for further research. It is also more than likely that candidates do not build into their essay plans sufficient space for the detail and consideration required for a supported and reflective conclusion. Candidates who achieve at higher levels will have evaluated perspectives as a prelude to concluding. This evaluation facilitates a supported and balanced conclusion. Having carefully planned the balance of the essay, they will then have the space to reflect upon the impact of these perspectives on their own understanding and beliefs, on the learning they have benefited from and, crucially, how, through further research, they could develop their learning and understanding. It is important to note that, in making suggestions for further research, they are considering this from a personal standpoint and not where gaps in understanding exist in a general sense, which will not be credited. The extract below is from an essay on media censorship where evidence and perspectives have previously been evaluated, and the candidate displays thoughtful reflection in arriving at their conclusion:

"These ideas were instrumental in making me understand the complexity of the issue. The media, like all tools, can be used for the benefit or detriment of society. It acts as a critic for governments, a power which no other body has. Yet, the media is also a source of content which might derogate certain cultures and religions. As such, I conclude that censorship of media should be censored to the extent that it does not curtail the rights of the general populace, even if this is not always feasible".

On the issue of further research, the example below, although it could be more concise reducing the length, encapsulates a reflective approach by the candidate to furthering their own learning:

"If I had the opportunity to further my research on this topic, I would invest more time examining the circumstances which led up to the passage of current laws involving stem cell research. This background information would help me to both understand the differences in modern research in comparison to the

research that was permitted before these laws were passed, as well as whether we as a world have progressed or regressed in terms of the research we are able to do on these life saving stem cells. This would also provide perspective on the opposing side of my argument as I would be able to see their preferred restrictions in comparison to what made it into laws that currently restrict stem cell research".

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/03
Team Project

Key messages

- Titles should allow teams to focus clearly on an issue and possible solutions.
- Issues are clearer when contextualised by a range of examples and evidence.
- The strongest presentations evaluate their own perspective against those of others.
- Effectively planned presentations are better structured and performed.
- Well-supported and justified solutions have a significant amount of space within the presentation as a whole.
- Successful reflective papers evaluate teamwork and reflect on specific examples of what candidates have learnt.

General comments

The Presentation

Titles

One of the distinctive features of this component is the way in which it allows teams, with the support of their teacher, to choose their own issue and, based on this, write their own titles for their presentations. The benefit of this is that it gives candidates the freedom to pursue their own interests and focus on issues which are relevant to them within their local communities, even while they place these within a global context. However, the choices candidates make about the formulation of their titles can also limit the work they are able to produce. For example broad questions such as ‘how does war affect the world?’ make it hard to identify an effective solution in the presentation. Equally, questions which are formulated as a debate, for example ‘should the death penalty be allowed?’, tend to produce ‘yes’ and ‘no’ perspectives which distract from the candidate’s own approach, and make it harder to develop a solution, because it is unclear to what the solution responds.

Issues, Perspectives and Solutions

There are some key terms used to describe what candidates should be doing in the team project, and where teams were clear about these, their individual presentations benefitted. The issue is the problem they have all decided to focus on in their local area which has global relevance. Each team member then adopts a distinctive perspective, or approach to the issue, which is individual to them. Candidates might also find different perspectives in the research they undertake into the issue. The perspective should lead to a solution, which is the set of concrete actions recommended by the candidate to resolve the issue they have identified. The solution should also be distinctive to each individual candidate, but it is important not to conflate the solution with the perspective. Where candidates did this (by saying their solution was their perspective or vice versa) they found it harder to clearly explain their perspective and its relationship with their solution, limiting their ability to justify why their solution was an effective answer to the issue they had identified.

Definition of the Issue

Candidates produced stronger presentations when they were able to clearly identify and define their issue at the outset. In the following example, the candidate does this by placing the issue of waste disposal in both a local and more broadly global context, and supporting this with relevant evidence from their research:

Today I am going to talk about waste disposal which is a global issue and has become one of the biggest problems in the Russian Federation as well as in the global community. First of all, waste disposal becomes a problem when countries are failing to recycle or liquidate the growing amount of waste. According to Greenpeace, in Russia the problem of waste disposal has dramatically increased, with landfills now occupying more than 41 million square meters, which is the same size as some European countries. This is also a significant issue everywhere around the world since all countries are using products in plastic bottles, cartons, cans, and throwing out food leftovers. Globally we produce around 1.3 billion tons of waste which is estimated to increase up to 4 billion tons...

Issues which were supported by specific evidence also framed locally and globally in a way that could be tackled within an eight minute presentation tended to be more successful. This meant that issues which were more narrowly defined produced more effective arguments. It was also important for the issue to clearly pose a problem for one or more groups of people as this led more obviously to a solution which could be argued for in the presentation.

Differentiation of Perspectives

The second criterion requires candidates to take a consistent approach to their issue and to differentiate it from those taken by other members of their team (or indeed other perspectives they have found in their research). Candidates scoring Level 1 for this criterion did not consistently make their own approach obvious. In order to achieve above Level 2, candidates had to at least refer to the approaches taken by other members of their team, or other approaches which could be taken. The majority however did this simply by listing those perspectives. This established what the other perspectives were, but not the significance of this. For example, the economic perspective on school funding (what is best value for money?) will differ sharply from the educational, social and political ones. The highest achieving candidates recognised and explained this in their presentations, as in this example where the team's issue was terrorism:

My team mate ... has taken the approach of negotiating with recognised 'major' terrorist groups. This is not going to be effective, mostly because not all countries are attacked by major terrorist groups and terrorist groups are formed to rebel against an idea, so may not respond to negotiation.

The alternative perspective is not just identified but evaluated against the candidate's own, which also produces the benefit of more sharply focusing their own argument towards a solution.

Structure of the Presentation

For the most part, the narrower and better defined and differentiated the issue, the better chance candidates had of producing a tightly structured and coherent presentation which made an argument from a specific perspective rather than just describing the research done. Candidates tended to under-run more often on the eight minute length rather than going over, often by two to three minutes or more, and therefore losing the opportunity to build their argument, present the research they had done and explain their solution. Those who delivered eight minute presentations which were effectively structured also demonstrated good planning skills. Having said that, some presentations of six minutes scored as highly as longer ones due to a clear focus. This was supported by tightly dividing the script between the stages of the presentation (for example, introduction to the issue, differentiation of perspective, development of perspective, conclusion and solution), with the material for each section carefully controlled within a few hundred words, and clear discourse markers indicating the transitions between stages of the presentation. The finished script had then been rehearsed then delivered. This sequence of planning tended to produce the strongest work on this criterion.

Conclusions and Solutions

Candidates who had selected their issue effectively, clearly differentiated their approach and supported it with detailed and varied research then came to conclusions and solutions which arose logically from this. It is worth making clear at this point the distinction between a conclusion and a solution. In a well organised presentation, the solution should form the conclusion, but solutions which were also conclusions explicitly supported themselves with the arguments and evidence which had been discussed earlier in the presentation. Solutions which were effective included some explanation of why they would work and have an impact on the issue. This also entails a significant amount of space in the presentation being given to the solution, as in this example which suggests the cultivation of plants in rooftop gardens using 'biochar' soil:

My solution is green roofs and biochar together. Biochar is the 'terra preta' of the Amazon Basin- so the 'black soil'. It just means its nutrient rich. It is made when organic matter smoulders in a poor

oxygen environment. And some of the benefits that apply to rooftop gardens are that they have less weight and are better for insulation of rooftops, so it traps heat in and it traps cold air in or it keeps it out, it increases the crop yield and growth of a plant, so it's more efficient for gardens, and as it's a form of carbon sequestration it keeps the carbon in the ground and not out in the atmosphere. It is also renewable and a form of waste management because it uses plant and animal waste to create the biochar (when it is burned).

Not only is the solution explained, but its effectiveness is justified with reasons and evidence. It is also only an extract from the candidate's full presentation of their solution.

Presentational Methods

Candidates tended to perform more strongly when they made a deliberate effort to engage with specific points on their slides or with their audience. Stronger presentations also had visually arresting images, or props which were shown and explained as part of the substance of what was being said. Candidates who presented more effectively had also either memorised their scripts, or had internalised them to the extent that they could use key points on cue cards, allowing them to maintain eye contact with their audience, use meaningful body language and vary their intonation in order to communicate meaning. All of this showed the deliberate employment of knowledge about effective communication and the fruits of extensive rehearsal prior to the recorded presentation.

The Reflective Paper

Evaluation of Work in a Team

This criterion asks candidates to focus on their work in their teams. Candidates who were able to describe what their team did and the processes involved in their work achieved in Levels 1 and 2 of the mark scheme. In order to achieve in Level 3 or higher it was necessary to evaluate their teamwork, identifying strengths and weaknesses and drawing conclusions from these. The focus on the team and therefore the actions of others and their relationship with them is an essential part of this, so equally it is not sufficient for candidates to just evaluate their own performance as an individual in working on their own presentation. The following example shows thoughtful evaluation of the work of the team:

...This procedure was effective, because it allowed us to manage our time effectively while researching, as both of us knew what we had to do. Also, we both responsibly did our work on time which was aided by the fact that the workload was equally shared between us. Furthermore, when we had our meeting, we listened attentively and didn't interrupt each other. Consequently, we were more productive as interruptions cause time wastage. However, we had frequent disagreements in our meeting which were hard to solve as there were only two of us in the group. This made us less efficient as a group and made it hard to make decisions. To improve our teamwork, we would have a third member in our group next time, so that we could quickly make decisions using a majority-wins voting system. If not, we could elect a leader who makes the final decisions.

Reflection on Learning from Alternative Perspectives

This criterion asks students to reflect on the impact of other perspectives, but it is essentially about learning. Candidates scored well when they identified what they knew and thought about the issue before starting the team project, what they knew and thought at the end, and explained the difference between the two. This extract from a reflective paper where the issue was the impact of coal mining is a good example of this approach:

During our research, the economic perspective affected my thinking the most. It discussed the economics behind job loss while I researched the societal effects of job loss. This made me think of the reasons coal mining must be converted to a different technology that also provides jobs, such as the solar industry. The economic perspective also provided me the opportunity to understand one of my points from both perspectives. The information I found that altered my way of thinking was on environmental injustice. It is much more prominent in our nation than I would have thought, and it was very disturbing to discover how many people are affected by this issue. For example, before I began research I didn't know that the Navajo and Hopi territory were affected by environmental injustice, this made me think of ways to help them.

Here the candidate shows how they learnt things about their own perspective through the work of other team members, as well as the impact of their research on their views, supported by specific examples.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/04
Cambridge Research Project

Key messages

Marks for **AO1: Research** should be based on process rather than the quality of the outcome.

Higher level marks for **AO1: Evaluation** should only be given if there are distinct and supported judgements about evidence and perspectives.

The Candidate Log should be a working document which informs the process of research and investigation.

General comments

There was much interesting and valuable work.

When assessing **AO1: Research** a clearer distinction could have been made between the process of research and the degree of independent and motivated study, the willingness to consider advice and the keeping of a log which showed the development of study and the final outcome. The quality of argument, evaluation and reflection is assessed separately and comments on the individual candidate record card should focus on how the research has been carried out.

Similarly, the mark awarded for **AO3: Communication** should be based partly on the discussion/viva and not just the content of the report. Where this was done the assessors offered helpful annotations and comments on the record cards which showed that the candidates' oral explanations had met the criterion for a higher level. Where the comments were more focused on the work itself rather than the skill of communication, it was more problematic to see why marks had been awarded. It is a vital part of the process that candidates should discuss and defend their findings to check how robust their understanding is. It also ensures that the work is the candidates' own. More positively it is a chance for the candidate to show his or her enthusiasm and commitment in a discussion that will be preparation for higher level study and work.

A key element in the process is the maintenance of a log. This should be seen as an essential part of the process of research. The topics chosen often need a lot of reflection and thought as 'the answer' is not readily accessible or even important – it is the critical consideration of issues that is at the core of the exercise. This may mean that candidates have to deal with very different opinions in the research materials they have accessed. Their thinking about this and also how they have resolved issues by looking for wider evidence should be shown in the logs. This discussion and evaluation of what they have read is essential for the final report, so the log should be a working document. At a basic level, ideas do often occur when students are engaged with issues and the log is a way of ensuring that these ideas can be remembered and used. The log is also a way for teachers to chart progress and offer guidance on the process of research in accordance with the guidelines for acceptable teacher assistance. The log is also an important way of ensuring that the work is the candidates' own and not plagiarised by excessive reliance on the ideas of others. Another important use of the log is in the final reflection.

In terms of actual outcomes, then areas for development could be in relevant argument, evaluation and reflection.

There was much work which was very sharply focused on the issue and identified and evaluated clearly different perspectives. The range of evidence used was often impressive and a critical approach was taken. Some of the reflection was thoughtful and considered how conclusions might be modified by further research.

Where there was room for improvement was often in the response to the terms of a question which the candidate had chosen. Questions must be approved and the advice given considered, especially when approval has provisos or modifications to the title suggested. However it may be that once research gets underway the scope of the original question needs to be modified or a rather different approach fits better with the available evidence. It is better to change the question than attempt to answer the original question in a way that does not achieve adequate focus on its exact wording. If there is a major change then Cambridge International should be informed, but minor changes or changes which alter the scope of the research are quite acceptable. It is important that the implications of the question are considered and that the focus is on the central issue.

The main area for improvement is in the evaluation of the evidence chosen. It is vital to evaluate the different overall perspectives on the issue under consideration. Research cannot be taken at face value but must be subjected to critical scrutiny.

It may be helpful to define again what is meant by the term 'perspective' as the evidence should be used to support contrasting perspectives and evaluated to test the validity of the perspective. Some centre marking indicates that perspective is used more in terms of social, political, economic, ethical or social elements of the topic. This is defined as a theme in global perspectives. Thus, to take an example, there might be different overall perspectives on euthanasia – broadly that it should be legal and generally available on one hand and that it should not be legal or available on the other. Within those perspectives there are different themes – medical, legal, ethical, religious. However the task is to assess the perspectives by considering a contrasting range of evidence and by critical assessment a supported judgement should be reached.

The choice of evidence and the way it is assessed is crucial to the process. Many reports did adopt a critical approach to the sources but there remains some misunderstanding of the distinction between using evidence to support a view and evaluating that evidence. Marginal annotation sometimes indicated that the marker thought that explaining evidence was the same as evaluating evidence. However evaluation requires forming a critical judgement on the validity of research materials. To do this involves deploying the critical thinking that has been learnt and developed during the course.

While it is important to look at the origin of the sources used there should be, for higher level marks for evaluation, a more developed critical sense and consideration of assumptions, supporting evidence, methods and methodology. Without this, critical comments are likely to be superficial. It is of limited value to notice that the evidence comes from a respected academic journal when contradictory evidence may also come from a respected academic journal but from a writer with a different opinion. Resolving the differences between differing sources is a key skill which builds on GP and is essential for higher level performance.

The problem is rarely in the selection of sources and many reports are assiduous in finding relevant materials and referencing them in an acceptable academic manner. It is rather that the sources are too often taken at face value. It is in this aspect that teacher input can be invaluable, not in providing specific advice on particular sources but in reinforcing the skills learnt in GP and teaching students how to assess evidence generally. This is a legitimate means of support and should lead to greater independent assessment and thinking by the students.

The last aspect which needs improvement is the process of reflection. Thinking about the decision made from a critical study of evidence to decide whether the conclusions drawn are viable is a key life skill. The process of research will often mean that learners modify their original views. However the eventual conclusion, however nuanced, does need to be reflected on. Would more evidence change the view? Was the methodology adequate? Does research throw up areas which needed more research? How robust is the final view taken? Often reports do not make enough distinction between conclusions drawn and reflection on how those conclusions were reached. There was a lot of over-personal comment on the nature of the intellectual journey undertaken which has its place, but reflection should include more than this.

Most reports were written in a suitable style and had been carefully checked. Footnotes and bibliographies were included in the main. However, sometimes sources were included in the final biography but were difficult to trace in the actual report. In terms of communication, learners should see this as an academic exercise. Unless the topic is very specialised, long background description is not necessary and the quicker that the report gets to the key arguments, discussions and analyses of evidence, the better.

In general, evaluation could be more developed. There was a wide range of sources used and analysed and much interesting and valuable material from serious and purposeful research.