



General Certificate of Education

**Health and Social Care
8621/8623/8626/8627/8629**

HC18 Social Policy

Report on the Examination

June 2010

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HC18 Social Policy

Principal Moderator's Report

The quality of the work for this unit continues to follow an upward trend.

The unit challenges candidates to acquire and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how central and local governments attempt to deal with social problems in the UK today. This year's cohort identified a diverse collection of current and appropriate social issues. The improved quality of the portfolios appeared to be linked to candidates' genuine interest in some of the issue tackled, such as increases in child poverty, homelessness and adolescent suicide rates. There was a tendency for candidates to express the problem/issue in too loose a format. For example, rather than simply entitling a report, 'Problems with child protection issues' it might be better to formulate a question such as 'Have government policies on child protection issues had a significant impact on the number or seriousness of the cases resolved?'

The reports were generally tighter and more formal this year, with a reduction in the inclusion of generic materials that only serve to bulk out reports and are largely irrelevant. Some candidates, however, did provide some comprehensive accounts of the consequences of not tackling the issues, using current examples taken from government statistics and legitimate media reports. More able candidates also described the indicators and impact of successful policies on individuals and society generally.

A persistent problem identified in this year's reports is the failure of candidates either to understand or make clear their understanding of appropriate 'instruments of social policy' and their potential impact or usefulness in tackling the identified social issue. Legislation was the most commonly referred-to instrument; others such as 'gate keeping', 'charging' or 'taxation' were almost always neglected. Candidates need to demonstrate their understanding and ability to apply the appropriate terminology and this remains a problem area that serves as a barrier to some portfolios reaching the higher-mark bands.

A range of policy solutions including hybrids was included and applied successfully to the targeted issue by the majority of candidates (including some sensible and well-considered solutions of their own invention). The descriptions of existing national and local policies revealed strong research skills with appropriate referencing to secondary source information. The reality of the application of the identified policies was intelligently described and discussed by more able candidates.

There was a significant increase in the marks awarded for Section D this year. Research evidence was more comprehensive, with numerical and graphical data presented appropriately. The real shift here was in application. Candidates not only reported the research data, but used it to support or contest the effectiveness of policy solutions. The data was competently analysed and incorporated fully into the conclusions drawn.

Once again, the most limited section of the reports was Section E where candidates are required to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of potential or actual policy solutions. This section tended to be given less attention than other areas of the report, was often very brief, lacking in focus, full of unsubstantiated statements and generally detached. It is almost as if candidates had run out of time or resourcefulness. It is important that the reports are coherent and logical conclusions drawn and discussed. Evaluation of the evidence was a critical element of this unit and should be tackled accordingly.

To conclude, candidates tackled this unit competently, improvements are apparent year-on-year.

Grade boundaries

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