GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/11
Paper 11

Key Messages

Content

- Answer the **set** question and focus on the key words.
- Support your main points with appropriate examples.
- Keep anecdotal/personal evidence to a minimum.
- An introduction should immediately address the question and show understanding of it.
- A conclusion should be a reasoned assessment of the arguments made.
- Ensure that all aspects of the question are addressed.
- Re-visit the question after each paragraph.
- It is important to choose the question which best suits what you know.

Use of English

- Leave time to check your English thoroughly to avoid basic errors.
- Concentrate on using appropriate vocabulary so expression is fluent and precise.
- Basic sentence structure/grammar needs to be accurate to ensure clear communication of content.

General comments

More successful responses answered the question as set and included a variety of examples to illustrate the main points of the essay. There were many examples which offered few or no examples at all, resulting in vague and generalised arguments which either lacked conviction or were unconvincing.

When the set question demands it, candidates should focus on aspects of their own country; if this is not the prompt then a broader focus is required. More successful responses demonstrated good topic knowledge and included local, regional and global examples to support points. Those that were less successful wrote on topics with which they were insufficiently familiar and provided little or no evidence to support points made. Candidates need to spend time studying the chosen question to make sure they understand what is being asked and then re-visit after every paragraph to check that key words are being addressed. Although topic knowledge was often thorough and detailed, there was a tendency to present it more as a descriptive list than an evaluative discussion.

Most candidates used the time reasonably efficiently and were able to produce a clearly structured essay of around the recommended length. Some responses could have gained higher marks had their introductions been briefer and more focussed. The introduction is where the candidate should begin to address key words, to reassure themselves that, from the beginning, they understand the question. Effective conclusions arrived at a reasoned, personal assessment, rather than listing points from the essay.

Despite the rarity of rubric infringements and 'short' essays (less than 375 words), the quality of the Use of English was variable. A substantial number of candidates have acquired a wide-ranging English vocabulary (especially technical/specialised) but need to ensure they use these words in an appropriate context. Thorough and systematic checking for errors would help greatly to improve the standard, as well as to clarify content.

Use of English

Basic errors need to be checked and corrected in order to improve English marks. Typical examples are listed below:

- Subject/verb non-agreement
- Frequent incorrect or superfluous use of the definite and/or indefinite article
- Omission of apostrophes
- Confusion between homophones such as their/there/they're, to/too and your/you're
- Incorrect comparative forms
- Missing endings on plurals (which could be corrected through checking)
- Incorrect use of vocabulary
- Incorrect use of prepositions
- Using advanced vocabulary incorrectly or inappropriate ways, e.g. '*myriads*' and '*plethoras*'

In a number of cases, it may be better if sentences were phrased using candidate's own wording, in preference to the use of clichéd phrases which do not always show full understanding, for example:

- 'How good was that?'
- '(In) This day and age'
- 'In a nutshell'
- 'At the end of the day'
- 'Holistic approach'
- 'Mother Nature'
- 'Think outside the box'
- 'Words are inadequate to describe…'
- 'Since time immemorial'
- 'On a conclusive note'

Whilst the above phrases may be appropriate in some instances, in most cases candidates could gain better marks by using their own phraseology, to demonstrate contextual understanding, in preference to using the stock phrases that may not be appropriate or strictly accurate.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The words 'evaluate the extent' permit candidates to examine the case for prioritising sport and leisure in a given country. The need for, and benefits of, sport and sometimes leisure were mentioned in many responses to this question, but only a few endeavoured to rank them in relation to the other needs of the country, and many responses could have gained higher marks had they given greater consideration the word 'priority'. Some very good responses made it clear that in their countries there were other, more pressing priorities than sport and leisure.

Question 2

Many responses to this question were strikingly honest and bold about the history their own countries as well as others'. In many responses the view was accepted that lessons could be learned from both domestic and foreign experience, though many responses would have benefitted from describing how these lessons might be applied in the future. A few responses detailed the history of the candidates' own country. These could be effective essays, particularly where candidates challenged Eurocentric historical interpretations, though in order to achieve high marks there also had to be some consideration of other countries. The best responses discussed their own country's place in world history and a few pointed out that political borders are relatively recent developments.

Question 3

Most of the responses to this question were focused on the idea of democracy alone and, though often detailed, these responses would have benefitted had they also addressed 'people power'. Examples could have could have been offered from various parts of the world; Egypt, Greece and Venezuela, to name a few. A few responses pointed out that, even where a democratic vote prevailed, it was actually the leader(s) who directed a successful democracy. A few discussed the dangers of mob rule and the descent into anarchy broadening their discussion to describe the consequences; violence, civil war, innocent victims.

Question 4

Responses to this two-part question often focussed on justifying the initial 'scene-setting' sentence, rather than addressing effectively the key question of responsibility in the second part of the question. A number of answers therefore exemplified the dis/advantages of multi-nationals, but would have benefited from addressing the prime question of the responsibility to make good the 'damage', a word that needed to be analysed. Some responses used balanced illustration, such as mining companies taking diamonds out of a country but providing employment and improving infrastructures that benefited the people generally. The highest marks were achieved when the remarks made were attached to relevant and supporting examples of companies that exploited resources for negative or positive reasons.

Question 5

Most responses to this question pursued the 'functional' defence of 'Math' being necessary in, for example, banking and shopping. Stronger responses also spoke eloquently about the language, scope, and beauty of mathematics, but nearly all answers saw 'Mathematics' as 'Arithmetic'. The key word in this question is 'majority'. Candidates recognised that we all need counting skills, but the strongest responses also gave full consideration to the various occupations and subject disciplines that require mathematical skills. Incidentally candidates are best advised not to launch into an attack on the compulsory study of the subject in school, though they may wish to consider why this compulsion is so.

Question 6

Questions such as this need to be approached both with caution and a spirit of critical fairness towards the opposing views on the issue. The key issue, here, is prosecuting the 'helper'. There were a number of essays that delved into the twin issues of the desirability of dignified euthanasia *in extremis* and of the problems attendant on the decision, but the best responses also considered the role of law (and of the wider consequences). A few essays included personal experience in both a moving and thoughtful way. Understandably many wrote in general terms about euthanasia, but that was not the question. Those who considered legal, religious, and medical aspects, wrote essays which were relevant.

Question 7

There were too few responses to this question for a report to be made.

Question 8

This can be considered as a two-part question and many candidates approached it as if it was. In the majority of responses the opening paragraphs were used to point out the benefits of the internet before considering how it could be misused and become an addiction. This was a valid approach, but some responses would have benefitted had a stronger counter-argument then been offered, illustrating some of the less desirable aspects of internet use. The approach of many candidates to this question illustrates the need for a clear statement of intent in the introduction as pointed out in the 'Key Messages' section. Several candidates defined 'addiction' successfully and were able to offer quite striking examples of how addiction and the internet interact. In a small number of responses the source of the addiction was questioned, blaming not the internet itself, but our 'inner addiction'. The best responses saw the potential for a wide-ranging debate by keeping the word 'addiction' at the forefront of the response.

Question 9

Some responses to this question compared the silent film era to the films of today, making the point that great films do not necessarily require a sophisticated or beautifully composed musical score. The best responses to this question used a range of examples to illustrate the points made. Some were very successful, citing film versions of musicals such as 'West Side Story' and, of course, 'The Sound of Music'. Others looked at specific genres such as the Western or the horror movie and built a strong case for how integral music is to a film's impact. Some stronger responses were able to refer to specific composers. Many responses would have benefitted from using the appropriate vocabulary. Many responses described music as 'good', 'scary', 'exciting', 'loud' or 'emotional', but would have benefitted from more specific wording. Those who were able to analyse the music they exemplified did well.

Question 10

The key word in this question is 'reading' and not 'internet'. Many responses to this question described the experience of reading from screen on tablet or PC and the attendant advantages for learning, shopping, and communication – in other words, the advantages and disadvantages of reading on-screen and of having

ready internet access. Many responses that adopted this approach focussed excessively on description of the technology, but would have benefitted from analysis of the nature of the reading that it encouraged. The best responses to this question went beyond this approach to examine how reading on e-readers compared to traditionally printed material may affect the nature of the way in which we read, and examined the implications on how people process written information. The best responses queried, for example, the ability to read into text printed on small-format electronic screens, where scanning across an entire passage may not be possible, and the possible effect on long-term memory of reading on electronic devices that have search capability.

Question 11

Most responses to this question analysed 'image' (the key word) quite successfully. Responses showed an informed familiarity with the world of the designer label and often referred to the expensive brands such as 'Prada', 'Versace' and 'Gucci'. It was recognised in many responses that the young are particularly vulnerable to the subliminal advertising of the fashion industry, though few examples queried the practicality of much fashion, which was often assumed. Given the significant number of very engaged and well exemplified responses the omission did not prevent candidates gaining high marks.

Question 12

Most responses to this question deployed a wide-range of examples to support their arguments, such as 'The Kardashians' and various iterations of 'Big Brother' or similar programmes. There was a range of perceptive insights, and many responses went beyond common sense and wrote philosophical essays on reality and appearance which were full of common sense. Candidates were able to distinguish between the real and the contrived with careful selection and use of examples their essays made sense contextually. For example a few referred to the real humiliation inflicted upon people in the preliminary rounds of 'Pop Idol' and 'X Factor'.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/12
Paper 12

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was approached by most from a personal perspective with many examples anecdotal. Sometimes the response was too subjective, with a limited range and depth, but 'importance' was always addressed. More successful candidates were more objective and approached it from a sociological perspective, sometimes citing appropriate authorities such as 'Parsons'. There was careful reference to the family being the tool of 'primary socialisation'. Also, reference was made to the range of families found in modern times, often in a cultural context, and an acknowledgement of the family's role in achieving social cohesion.

Question 2

In most responses 'education' was recognised as a 'measure of achievement', important for higher education and 'a respectable career'. Less successful responses did not move beyond this, stressing that the gathering of certificates was essential, not only for the individual but for family pride. More successful candidates were able to argue in broader terms, considering education as a preparation for adult life, and the responsibility that comes with it. There was some recognition of the vocational aspect although this was never fully developed. A few balanced the need for 'qualifications' with the need for 'life skills education', arguing that too much 'qualification pressure' could be destructive as well as constructive.

Question 3

Many responses to this question would have gained higher marks had they focussed more on the 'image' aspect of the question. Often references to it were vague and tangential with constant references to 'soccer'. The popular example was 'The World Cup' with its issues of corruption, financial mismanagement and popular protest. More successful candidates did link their country's international participation in sport to improving their country's image, encouraging people's patriotism and involvement in local sporting activities. Most candidates were able to visualise the health benefits derived from sport, but the best addressed 'to what extent', balancing the positives with the negatives (match-fixing, crowd behaviour, as a priority for government funds).

Question 4

Many responses to this question tended to focus on World War Two and its legacy. Most candidates seemed to be knowledgeable about history but it was whether the candidate addressed the 'more than just learning the facts' aspect of the question that often determined their success in responding to the question. A popular point was 'not repeating mistakes' but the most successful explored the reliability of historical facts, which were often popularised by biased sources with fixed loyalties. The range of examples was then the determining factor, some considering the French Revolution and American Independence. Some candidates focused only on local history.

Question 5

There were some successful responses to this question, which discussed a clear detailed understanding of a country's topography, its land use and the problems faced by corruption, tradition, rapid development and financial mismanagement by the government. The most successful responses did recognise that, in the end, it was government policy on land use which either allowed a country to progress or stagnate.

Question 6

Responses to this question were often ready to acknowledge that the government had a vital role to play in people's health through raising health awareness, providing health facilities and implementing vaccination and/or medication programmes. More successful responses balanced this against 'the responsibility of the individual' and explored dietary concerns, alcohol and smoking-related problems, fitness and even alternative therapies (such as yoga and meditation). References to Ebola were inevitable considering the current media attention.

Question 7

Many candidates were able to produce balanced and focused responses. Very few just wrote all they knew about computers. The degree of reference to 'pocket-sized' was the differentiating factor. However, 'portability' was a feature of most responses, often exploring the technical aspects of such devices. This could be list-like or descriptive but the most successful responses considered cost issues and referred to a range of advantages and disadvantages. Conversely, there was awareness of the disruptive influence of 'pocket-sized' devices on young lives, often to the detriment of their education. The best responses did 'assess' and produced a personal evaluation, often as a reasoned conclusion.

Question 8

Many responses to this question could have gained higher marks had they been more tightly focussed on answering the actual question set. Many candidates tended to offload their knowledge of global warming with most describing natural disasters but with very little on 'lessons learned'. Sometimes there were generalised ideas but these were often implicit and superficial. The most successful addressed 'how true' with reference to the building of infrastructures (e.g. Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station), re-locating populations or improving building structures, often with a final assessment that 'lessons learned' are limited in the face of such powerful, unpredictable natural forces.

Question 9

Most responses to this question featured an example of a storyline from a film, but would have benefitted from tighter focus on the question set, as many responses tended to be descriptive with tenuous reference to special effects. There were references to CGI dominating a film, where the plot was lost in the spectacle of it all, but the most successful of these arguments gave specific examples of this occurance, and many tended to be too generalised. More successful responses detailed how special effects, without an effective storyline, could be frustrating or even boring. However, some considered that certain genres needed special effects to be convincing (sci-fi/horror). The most successful provided a range of appropriate examples and addressed 'how far', often using 'Avatar' as an example of a film which provided ground-breaking special effects but still maintained complex and effective storytelling.

Question 10

Most responses to this question focused on the ecological impact of 'not cutting down trees' to supply paper and that it would not matter if newspapers disappeared because everyone has a computer anyway. Some highlighted the impact on the poor, marginalised sectors of society by suggesting that they would be disadvantaged, in terms of not having access to news, because they could not afford computers or reliable internet connections. The most successful responses did address 'to what extent' suggesting that wi-fi or mobile internet connections are becoming the norm, but that some people will always enjoy magazine/newspaper reading as something cheap, portable and tangible. However, most responses concluded that 'it didn't matter whether they disappeared' as it was inevitable, in the context of technological progress.

Question 11

There were too few responses to this question for a report to be made.

Question 12

Most responses to this question considered censorship in the context of cultural values and propriety, with an emphasis on advertising providing a truthful representation of a product. The most successful responses addressed 'to what extent', arguing that the only 'essential' element of censorship was if the advert was misleading, but that anything else depended on factors such as age, religion, values of different countries or groups.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most responses considered treatment in the home and at school, tending to present a one-sided argument focusing on a young person's rights (or lack of them). Authorities were described as repressive, unfair or unsympathetic. More successful responses challenged the quotation and considered that young people needed to be educated, disciplined and learn moral values in order to achieve responsibility in adulthood and become a 'first-class' citizen. Some emphasised that, in some cultures and/or families, young people were attributed with constant 'first-class' status. Some did address 'sometimes' and suggested that discipline was 'a necessary evil'.

Question 2

Most responses to this question suggested that 'respecting popular opinion' characterised a successful democracy and was 'important' as such, referring to various consequences if it was not respected (violent protest, ousted government, clampdown by the authorities). Examples were often taken from known dictatorships. More successful responses introduced balance by suggesting that sometimes unpopular decisions have to be made for the good of law and order, the economy, or improving infrastructure. Better responses also concluded that a way of respecting popular opinion was through government transparency and incorruptibility. The free press was seen as a measure of 'popular opinion' and government accountability.

Question 3

There were a number of successful responses to this question but most would also have benefitted from citing more examples. All responses possessed an argumentative tone and supported the idea that terrorist acts were criminal acts, outside the world of politics. The most successful responses suggested that terrorism could be defined in different ways by various groups and governments and provided some balance but still lacked examples.

Question 4

Most responses focused on the question and tended to cite the Middle East as a region which depends on one industry. Some considered local examples and tended to be descriptive, but supported the need for multi-nationals to operate in a country if economic progress is to be sustained. The most successful responses were balanced with a reasoned conclusion and integrated a range of examples.

Question 5

Responses to this question mostly balanced the disadvantages with advantages. The range could have been more extensive but did focus on excessive cost, changing priorities, or that nothing significant had occurred since landing on the moon, and considered these in the context of encouraging new technology, man's curiosity and the need to save the planet from possible asteroid collision. Some examples were given.

Question 6

Most responses to this question referred to Ebola and seemed knowledgeable about the aid available in terms of human resources and medication. Some considered the difficulty of providing aid to corrupt, autocratic countries and questioned how closely this was monitored. The most successful responses argued that education was the most significant 'aid', to teach about healthcare and for the poor to be made aware of preventable diseases. An assessment of 'to what extent' was also a feature of better responses.

Question 7

Good local knowledge was shown in most responses to this question, and many described a range of transport features, with specific examples, and were aware of certain developments and future attempts to improve. Whereas most did address 'efficiency', there was a tendency to focus primarily on urban communities. More successful responses provided a balanced view and assessed the degree of 'efficiency', expanding the argument to include countrywide features (the railways/public transport) and explored whether these met the needs of more rural communities. Less successful ones were anecdotal and often focused on one element, such as the need to get to work/school on time.

Question 8

Many responses considered the internet as an unlimited source of health information which enabled society to be more self-sufficient. Various forums were identified as allowing people to share their health issues/worries on a global scale. Any negative points were concerned with the sedentary lifestyle of internet users, repetitive strain injury and eye strain as well as mental health problems (cyberbullying) and the possibility of the internet encouraging hypochondria. The most successful responses addressed 'how far do you agree' with reference to both 'health' and 'well-being' and presented a reasoned conclusion linked to the idea of 'improving'

Question 9

There were too few responses to this question for a report to be made.

Question 10

Most responses to this question identified 'big budget' as special effects, car chases, explosions and overpaid actors. Some were descriptive, listing films, while others tended to generalise. The more successful responses suggested that storytelling was the most important feature of a good film and that the budget would be determined by the need to tell the story effectively. Some suggested that some genres inevitably needed a large budget to be convincing (sci-fi/horror) although citing such films as 'The Blair Witch Project' and 'Paranormal Activity' as low budget but effective horror films. The most successful responses addressed 'to what extent'.

Question 11

Many responses to this question slightly misunderstood the question and considered everyone becoming journalists, with the idea that 'amateurish' journalism, via 'blogs' and social networking sites, were distorting the truth, suggesting that professional journalists did not do this. Many responses would have benefitted from more examples being used. More successful responses focused on modern technology, enabling anyone to 'create news' via mobile phones/cameras and suggested that it empowered people to record the truth of events, although acknowledging that such 'news' could be fabricated as well. A range of examples were given to demonstrate the effects of such a development.

Question 12

There were some well-informed responses to this question, with most addressing both the 'singer' and the 'song'. Less successful responses described 'favourite' singers and then summarised the lyrics from various songs but did comment on which they found most important. More successful responses provided a wider range of examples, with a balanced argument. Some considered singer-songwriters, songs which stood the test of time, the emergence of 'manufactured' singers, and addressed 'how far do you agree'.