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Introduction

As the General Studies specification comes close to its end, the entry this year again declined sharply. Many candidates appeared not to have revised their application of number skills and some candidates weakened their overall performance by either not attempting some questions or else misreading them, producing answers which proved to be largely irrelevant. To offset these weaknesses, there were, as always, strong and confident answers from well-prepared candidates who thrived on a paper which tested them over a wide range of knowledge, understanding, interpretation and analysis.

Question 21 (a)

Most candidates recognised that the phrase meant such people had been born into a rich or privileged family. However, very few answers recognised that an elite is a small select group, considered superior to the rest of society.

21 Explain what the writers mean by the phrases:

(a) well-born elite (paragraph 2)

(2)

Upper class type people, born into a wealthier family. Believe everyone else on everyone else.



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The reference to being born into a wealthier family can justify 1 mark because this is close enough to the point about rich or privileged families in the mark scheme. The second line is not well expressed or explained but does convey the idea of superiority which is just sufficient for a second mark to be awarded.

Question 21 (b)

Few candidates understood that a 'real terms pay cut' occurred if the value of someone's pay was eroded by inflation or by a general decline in purchasing power; many interpreted the term as involving actual reductions in actual pay which is not what the passage is alleging.

(b) a real-terms pay cut (paragraph 4).

(2)

The value of a salary has decreased while the numerical value may have stayed the same or increased. The value of money changes due to inflation.



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This answer refers to two key terms mentioned in the mark scheme - value of a wage (i.e. purchasing power) and inflation. It could be better expressed but there is sufficient here to award 2 marks.

Question 22

Candidates who followed the instructions on the exam paper to identify a phrase containing only opinion from Paragraph 1 most frequently gave one of the following as their answer:

- The strange death of the British middle class
- The most disturbing social change of our age
- Will probably dominate your children's lives
- The lifestyle that the average earner had fifty years ago is now the preserve of the rich.

However, those who offered other phrases from other paragraphs gained no marks.

22 Write out a phrase containing only opinion from paragraph 1.

"We are witnessing the strange death of the British middle class - the most disturbing social change of our age"



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This answer gives the first and second acceptable answers listed above and there is no factual content, so 1 mark is awarded.

Question 23

Most candidates were able to obtain a mark by stating 'Margaret Thatcher's new government in 1979' as a fact from Paragraph 2. Unfortunately, many of them continued with further text from the source to add 'which revered small businessmen and savers'. This extra statement is an opinion, so candidates who added it to their answer achieved 0 marks overall. Quite a few answers which offered other facts from other paragraphs also gained no marks.

23 State a fact given in paragraph 2.

'Margaret Thatcher's new government in 1979, which
revered small businessmen and savers.'



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If the answer had ended at '1979', 1 mark could have been awarded. By adding 'which revered small businessmen and savers' the candidate is adding an element of opinion - so 0 mark is awarded.

Question 24

A statement of fact and opinion from Paragraph 3 was 'Round the Cabinet table, the privately-educated Chancellor and Prime Minister sit happily with 21 fellow millionaires'. Most candidates successfully identified this and gained the mark available, apart from those who chose other phrases from other than the required paragraph.

24 Write out a phrase containing a fact and an opinion from paragraph 3.

Round the Cabinet table, the privately-educated
Chancellor and Prime Minister sit happily with
21 fellow millionaires.



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This statement matches the correct answer, so 1 mark is awarded.

Question 25

Few candidates were able to define an assertion as 'A statement or declaration without support, evidence or reason'.

Even so, many answers successfully identified as an example either:

- They pin their hopes on the scratch card, the rollover jackpot or The X Factor

OR

- Unless they can get a job in finance, the next generation will find it hard to live even in the suburbs their parents inhabit.

25 Define an 'assertion'. Write out an example of an assertion from paragraph 6.

Definition

An assertion is a claim made without any supporting evidence given.

Example

"Instead they pin their hopes on the scratchcard, the rollover jackpot or The X factor."



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The definition mentions 'without evidence' so a mark is awarded.

The example matches the first acceptable answer mentioned above, so a second mark is awarded.

Question 26

The question said 'There are examples of inductive arguments in Source 1. Using your own knowledge, explain how strong the conclusions reached by inductive arguments are.' The question did not ask candidates to identify inductive arguments from the passage even though this is what a considerable number of candidates chose to do. Nonetheless, many candidates were able to identify one or more points such as:

- Conclusions of inductive arguments are only as good as the observations or evidence on which they are based
- Several different conclusions are possible and they may conflict/not prove to be correct
- Some conclusions may be based on few observations and can prove to be unreliable
- Conclusions based on **specific** inductive points are **generalised** and may often be **incorrect**
- Conclusions of inductive arguments are **less reliable** than those of deductive arguments.

26 There are examples of inductive arguments in Source 1. Using your own knowledge, explain how strong the conclusions reached by inductive arguments are.

An inductive argument is an argument in which many conclusions can be drawn. The conclusions reached by inductive arguments are not strong, they are weak, because more than one conclusion can be made and therefore makes it inaccurate and unreliable.



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This answer gains 1 mark for recognising that different conclusions are possible and another for stating that they are therefore potentially unreliable. This is just sufficient for 2 marks to be awarded.

Question 28

There were at least six distinct points that various answers made to show how the children of the middle class were now allegedly disadvantaged, compared to their parents:

The lifestyle that the average earner had fifty years ago — reasonably sized house, dependable healthcare, a decent education for the children and a reliable pension — is now the preserve of the rich.

Studying hard at school and university, finding a job, getting married, saving money and buying a house. For those who did that, Britain has been — until recently — a superb place to live.

In politics, media, and judiciary and to some extent sport, it is now the privately-educated rich who are in power

The best-paid 1%, now collect 14% of all the money paid in salaries in Britain, while the average earner has taken a real-terms pay cut of about 10% since the 2008 crash, and this is not expected to improve.

Many jobs that middle class workers would have undertaken are being overtaken by technology and/or outsourced abroad.

It seems impossible to save your way to a comfortable life and unless they can get a job in finance, the next generation will find it hard to live even in the suburbs their parents inhabit.

In addition, up to 3 marks were available for Quality of Communication. Candidates who took care of the ways in which they presented their answers and showed understanding of the rules of English grammar were generally able to secure 2 or 3 marks.

28 In what ways do the writers suggest younger members of contemporary middle-class families are in a less fortunate position than their parents?

(7)

They suggest before the middle-class was ruling class and benefiting economically. It suggests due to the change in power - taken over by upper-class, middle-class are losing their advantages. Therefore, claiming it's the death of British middle-class, ~~potentially~~ leaving just the rich ruling-class and then everyone else. For example, claims young no longer get 'reasonably sized house, dependable healthcare, a decent education for children and a reliable pension' like their parents. Implies middle-class + working-class divide.

blurring. Lastly, claims only chance of decent, stable life is with 'hopes on the scratchcard, rollover jackpot or The X Factor!'

In addition, one way the writers suggest younger members of contemporary middle-class families are in a less fortunate position than their parents is the statement that average earner salary cut by 10%. This could have significant affect on lifestyle



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The first paragraph of the answer reflects the original features of a middle class lifestyle and the scratch card point in the final paragraph of the source, so 2 marks are awarded.

The second paragraph reflects the point about real terms pay cut, gaining a further mark.

Communication is reasonably clear, so 2 marks are awarded.

Total: 3+2=5 marks

Question 29

On every paper, there is usually a question about the strength of the evidence and arguments contained in the source. This is the 'evidence and arguments' question for this examination series. Candidates mark questions such as this one by asking themselves five questions, for each of which a mark is available if the answer is 'yes'. These are:

Does the candidate discuss the writers' main conclusion?

Does the candidate refer to types of evidence - e.g. objectivity, subjectivity, facts, opinions?

Does the candidate refer to the adequacy of the evidence or to any gaps, flaws or bias?

Does the candidate refer to the writers' argument or to different types of argument?

Is a plausible final objective assessment made of the justification for the claim?

From this it will be clear that most of the candidates who wrote descriptively about the passage, often adding their own opinions or perspectives, had little chance of gaining any more than the one or two marks they actually received.

There was also a mark for Quality of Communication. If candidates avoided textspeak and colloquial language, it usually proved possible to score 2 or 3 marks if the conventions of grammar - paragraphs, sentences and correct spelling, for example - were adhered to throughout the answer.

29 How far do the evidence and arguments advanced by the writers justify the conclusion that wealth and power are now increasingly concentrated in the rich upper classes?

(8)

The evidence and arguments advanced by the writer can justify the conclusion that wealth & power are concentrated in the upper classes due to certain stats and figures e.g. the best paid that represent 1% of the country, are now collecting 14% of the British salaries. These figures alone show that only the wealthy and powerful in Britain, are truly

represented in the upper classes. Also, due to the technological advances, companies are now wiping out the workers jobs with machinery, in order to reduce the amount they pay for the workers and increase their own profit and pockets. Also, with the statement of all MP, being extremely wealthy and owning expensive materialistic things, e.g.

their own houses, shows that the upper classes hold ~~at~~ the majority of wealth & power. However, the arguments presented could counteract & show that the upper class does not hold all the wealth & power, due to many of the statements being unreliable. ~~These~~ Some statements are unreliable as some are opinion, rather than an actual fact. Using unadmirable things to show that the lower classes do not have wealth and power can show bias toward a

certain political party that evidently opposes the Conservative party. There are carpark uses of opinion such as "Britain has been - until recently - a superb place to live." This is extremely unreliable toward the reader.



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This answer does discuss aspects of the writer's main conclusion and also refers to the nature of the evidence, thus gaining marks for the first two questions listed above.

If the candidate had introduced paragraphs into the answer, a further mark might have been available for Quality of Communication (i.e. - 3 instead of 2).

Question 30

The question was set to give candidates an opportunity to discuss the injustices and anomalies which arise from the first-past-the-post electoral system as well as its strengths when compared to proportional representation systems - and the whole issue of majority or minority or coalition governments. Candidates whose answers met these aims were in a minority, many answers proving to be relatively superficial. Weak answers tended to assume that the 2015 election had been conducted using proportional representation - an assumption for which there was no justification and which inevitably destroyed the coherence of most such answers.

How far do the results of the 2015 General Election strengthen or weaken the case for replacing the first-past-the-post electoral system with a system of proportional representation?

(20)

The results of the 2015 General Election
→ weaken the case for replacing the first past
the post electoral system.

Out of a total of 650 Members of Parliament,
the Conservatives won 330 of the seats. This
is a majority of the house of commons
and lead them nicely onto being in charge
of the country. The Government did not
need to form a coalition, and so therefore
decisions that the party wanted to make
became easier to run through parliament.
It is clear to see that the conservatives
won over half of the seats in parliament, yet
only received 36.5% of the total vote.
The reason the Conservatives won more
than half of the seats is because the first
past the post system seems to meet the
needs of the people in the constituency they're

voting for instead of for the population as a whole.

~~If there was a hung~~ If the same results remained in the 2015~~th~~ General Election then but a ~~first past the~~ proportional representation ~~vote~~ vote was taken, then there would be a hung parliament - ~~like~~ similar to what happened with the 2010 election with the Conservatives and the Lib-Dems. This system of government was somewhat effective, but many decisions could not be made because there were too many people MPs who disagreed with each other and the bills could not be passed. In contrast to this, although the party in power had slightly more votes, they had the majority of seats in the 2015 election and so are able to effectively put their ~~parties~~ party's policies and manifesto into action.

One ~~downside~~ to the other advantage to the first past the post system is the story of the SNP. Because Scotland has a very low population in comparison to the rest of the UK, an vote that Scotland

wanted to have would not really be heard. However, with ~~proportional~~ the first past the post system, Scotland was able to increase the SNP's seats ~~to~~ so that all but 1 seat ~~is able to~~ was theirs. There were only 4.7% of the population voting ~~and~~ for the SNP but they won 56 out of 650 seats - 8.6% of the seats. This ~~clearly made~~ was very important to the people of ~~a~~ Scotland quite clearly, and proportional representation would not be able to showcase this.

~~Can~~ Tomorrow (8th June) will be the next general election for the UK which was called ~~by~~ by Theresa May to attempt to gain more seats in parliament to make Brexit negotiations easier.

the



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In the second paragraph the first 5 lines contain AO1 - 1 mark and AO2 - 1 mark, as do lines 5-8 and then the remainder of the paragraph, making AO1 - 3 marks and AO2 - 2 marks in all. On page 2 the discussion about coalitions earns a further AO1 - 2 marks, AO2 - 2 marks and the discussion about Scotland AO1 - 1 mark, AO2 - 1 mark. Communication is clear and awarded 3 marks.

Total 6+5+3=14 marks

Question 31

Candidates recognised that as population has grown, costs of motoring, housing and congestion have increased, leading to much greater demand for rail services. Some candidates argued that the increased popularity of rail arose from the substantial extra investment (switch from steam to electrification) and the benefits of privatisation, whilst others claimed that commuters, the young and those concerned by climate change were leading the return to rail. Most answers were successful, though inevitably some argued and justified the reasons for the change in popularity better than others.

What explains the expansion of rail travel in the UK when it appeared to be in terminal decline 50 years ago?

(20)

The expansion of rail travel in the UK can be explained by the huge increase in population compared to 50 years ago. A higher population means there are more people who may require public transport.

The number of drivers on the road has soared since 50 years ago which has meant that traffic is worse. As a result, particularly in areas such as London, roads can be very slow moving therefore people are using rail travel to commute faster and ensure they aren't late for work etc.

Due to increases in tax and other factors, driving has become a very expensive method of transport whereas rail travel is commendably cheap therefore people resort to rail travel as a cheaper alternative.

There are currently more rail lines in more locations than there were 50 years ago therefore people have more reason to use trains as places that were once only accessible by roads now have rail lines.

The advancement of technology has led to the production of faster trains such as the Bullet in Japan. Faster trains mean that a journey from Hull to London that would take around 5-6 hours in a car would now take 2-3 hours on a train.

More promotion is used on reducing your carbon footprint therefore people are now beginning to be more eco-friendly by using public transport thus leading to the increase in rail users over the years.



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This is a well-structured answer which makes a number of effective points in an orderly fashion.

Paragraph 1 AO1 - 1, AO2 - 1

Paragraph 2 AO1 - 1, AO2 - 1

Paragraph 3 AO1 - 1, AO2 - 1

Paragraph 4 The suggestion that there are now many more lines and stations (compared to the 1960s) isn't really correct so AO1 - 0, AO2 - 0

Paragraph 5 AO1 - 1, AO2 - 1

Paragraph 6 AO1 - 1, AO2 - 1

Communication is clear, so 3 marks are awarded.

Totals 5+5+3=13 marks

Paper Summary

With the life of this specification coming to a close, it is hardly appropriate to offer advice on good practice to help centres and candidates preparing future candidates. However, the strength of General Studies has always been its power to develop and reinforce transferable skills which will benefit candidates in their future academic and/or vocational careers. In specific terms, candidates are most likely to be successful if they develop and maintain:

- the skill of expressing themselves clearly and concisely
- the ability to apply number skills in an accurate and reliable manner
- a capacity to distinguish between different types of knowledge and argument
- a self-disciplined approach to timekeeping so they always make best use of the time available
- a focus on detail so they can quickly identify the precise requirements of a question or of any other matter which they are required to address.

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