

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level

MARK SCHEME FOR the June 2002 question papers

8436 THINKING SKILLS

8436/2

Paper 2 (Critical Thinking), maximum raw mark 50

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JUNE 2002

GCE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY LEVEL

MARK SCHEME

MAXIMUM MARK : 50

SYLLABUS/COMPONENT : 8436/2

THINKING SKILLS

Page 1 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	8436	2

Marking Guidelines: June 2002

1) The claim made by Karen Van Dyk (K) is that Linda Hong (L) caused a violent disturbance. This is a strong claim requiring more than evidence of mere annoyance, or even mild aggression, to support it. With this in mind, the evidence can be considered as follows:

Evaluation of main points

- 1 Fact Coffee was spilled, by either K or L, each blaming the other;
- 2 Fact L was angry and showed it.
- 3 Fact L stood up and there was a scuffle; the trolley was pushed by L and one or more objects may have fallen off it
- 4 Fact K and a colleague restrained L and security guards took her off the plane on landing.
- 5 Fact Linda was a 27 year-old, unmarried teacher with no record of violence

6 Statement - (K)

K claims L herself spilled the coffee, then: 'leapt to her feet', 'shouted insults and threats', refused to listen to apologies, violently pushed a trolley so things fell on other passengers, and 'lashed out' when restrained. If true, these would certainly amount to violent disturbance.

7 Statement - (L)

L claims the coffee was spilled on her because the staff were hurrying. She admitted to being angry and to calling K clumsy. Claims that K stopped her going to toilet to wash stains and admits she may have pushed trolley in the process.

8 Witness - man in next seat: (NS)

Did not see who spilled coffee. Claimed L was angry and stood up and 'muttered something'. Agreed with L that the trolley blocked her way and that there was a struggle. Does not state or imply that L was violent or unduly aggressive. If accurate his statement suggests that K was exaggerating.

9 Witness - doctor Sharma (S)

Neutral as to extent of violence. Could not hear what was said even from seat just behind, suggesting that K exaggerated when she claimed that L 'shouted insults and threats'.

10 Witness - Marian Deane (MD)

Strongly endorsed K's story: claimed L 'went crazy' and sent objects flying everywhere and cups and trays falling on her. However MD seems to have taken a liking to K and possibly sided with her against L because she (K) had been 'very nice' to her. She is also fairly elderly and by the tone of her statement has a tendency to dramatise – 'she could have been armed', 'staff very brave', etc. Against the more level statements of other nearby passengers, MD does not come over as a reliable witness.

11 Witnesses - other

None supported claims of violence and shouting. No objects fell on them.

12 Motives

In falsifying her statement, L has the obvious motive of avoiding prosecution. However, K also has one or more motives for falsifying (or at least exaggerating) her evidence: 1. To justify her alleged over-reaction; 2. To offset her (alleged) carelessness in spilling the coffee and hurrying her work.

Page 2 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	8436	2

Conclusion

It would be unsafe to conclude that L acted in the manner reported by K. Though no witnesses actually claim that K did over-react, the neutrality of their statements suggests that L's behaviour did not warrant K's response.

L's own version, in which she admits to annoyance and irritation, is reasonable and consistent both with facts and with other witness statements: she tried to push past the trolley to go to the toilet, and this was wrongly interpreted as aggression.

A tenable conclusion would be: K's claims were probably, or very probably, untrue or exaggerated.

Page 3 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	B436	2

2) (a) Summarise in your own words the main conclusion of the argument and one of the reasons given to support it [max 2]

Conclusion

- Politicians should see themselves as opinion leaders not as opinion led

Reason (one from):

- If politicians follow voters wishes they are likely to act in limited ways.
- Voters views are limited, selfish, intolerant, etc., and changeable.
- Policy would then be made on the basis of reasoned judgement, not to please voters.

b) Identify two assumptions that the author appears to be making in connection with paragraph 2. [max 2]

Any two from:

- Not wanting to pay taxes to fund worthwhile schemes is a sign of a biased view.
- Politicians do have the benefit of expert advice and research findings.
- Politicians tend to be less limited, selfish, intolerant, etc., than voters.

(c) Politicians disagree with each other over many issues. Do you think this fact strengthens or weakens the argument – or neither? [max 3]

It could be said the argument is weakened because it shows that politicians are not always right. The claim that the argument is weakened could be extended by saying that if politicians cannot agree, it makes no difference whether they have better judgement, etc., as they still get things wrong. However, it is neither claimed nor implied that politicians are always right, only that they are better informed, less prejudiced, etc. than voters. Two politicians could reach different but equally well-reasoned decision. Therefore there is a case for saying that politicians can disagree, without weakening the argument (although this does not go as far as strengthening it). It could even be added that disagreement (and consequent debate) helps politicians to form better judgements.

Credited responses: 'weakens...' or 'neither...'.

(d) How successfully does the author use the example of capital punishment to support the argument? [3]

In one respect the example is successful. It illustrates the point that if all politicians did was to reflect public opinion, certain unpopular measures would never have been adopted – including some that later become more popular. However, it could be objected that the author is trying to have it both ways: if low public support was not a valid argument against abolition at the time, increased public support is not really an argument for it now. More is needed to show that abolition has worked or had benefits, but the only evidence offered is that it '...did not cause a rise in murder rate.' This is not a very strong vindication for abolition, making the example less successful than the author would have wanted.

Credited response: limited success

Page 4 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	8436	2

(e) In the last paragraph a comparison is made between selling goods and 'selling' political decisions. Do you think it is a fair comparison, and does it successfully contribute to the argument? [4]

On one level, yes, it is a fair comparison, since it acknowledges that media advertising can persuade us to accept ideas or decisions just as it persuades us to buy goods. And it is successful to the extent that it counters the anticipated objection the author raises in the last paragraph of the argument. However, it is a rather far-fetched analogy, since goods and decisions are so very different in kind. It could also be criticised because it relies on a metaphorical use of the word 'selling', not on a literal one, and is therefore a persuasive (rhetorical) device rather than a real argument. Finally it could be said that it is counter-productive in that it cheapens the political process to 'sell' ideas; or, worse still, in that it has sinister overtones of propaganda, brainwashing, totalitarianism, etc.

Credited responses : not entirely fair comparison; not an entirely successful contribution

(f) Democracy is based on the principle of 'government by the people'. Does the argument fully support, or does it challenge, this principle? [4]

It is safe to say it does not 'fully' support the principle. In a very obvious way it challenges it, since it suggests that the views of the people should not be the directing factor for political decisions. It also suggests, in a cynical way, that the people should be 'sold' policies, implying that they should be manipulated by politicians, which goes against the idea of 'government by the people'. However, there are many ways in which it could be argued that government by the people is maintained even with politicians being opinion leaders and not opinion led. Firstly, the politicians have been elected and can be removed by the people if they dislike the decisions and policies of the elected leaders. And people don't have to accept what they are 'sold'; they can object and vote for different leaders.

Credited response: challenges, but not seriously or fatally

Page 5 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	8436	2

3)

Analysis

Main conclusion (MC): Firms should be able to plead special status under a 'harm test', and this should be the critical factor in deciding whether employees can be made to work full time.

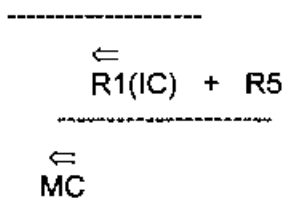
Reasons

- R1 Big problems loom if part-time work becomes an automatic right
- R2 Small firms may be unable to be family friendly (because) they rely on dedicated full-time staff (and) finding temporary replacements may be impossible
- R3 Resentments would inevitably build up from childless colleagues
- R4 Penalties may be faced and/or contracts lost resulting from part time working
- R5 We should not lose sight of the needs of businesses to remain competitive and productive

Structure

The argument has two planks. One is the claim that part time working would lead to problems. This is R1, and it is supported and/or explained in paragraph 3 by R2, R3, R4. R1 could therefore be considered an intermediate conclusion (IC). This and the claim that we should not lose sight of the needs of business are then used jointly to conclude that a harm test should be established (MC).

R2 + R3 + R4



Variations on this analysis are acceptable. (For instance R2 could be broken down into three separate claims, or into a mini-argument with its own intermediate conclusion.)

The first two paragraphs, (with the exception of the last sentence) are introductory. They are not part of the main argument, but provide a background or context for it. This context is as follows: (1) That parents face a harsh choice between loss of income and placing their children in a nursery for ten hours a day; (2) That many people now believe parents should be able to work part time when they have new children; (3) That many do this because large firms can accommodate it.

To demonstrate a thorough understanding of the structure (highest level) candidates should recognize the reasoning and conclusion; and give a convincing explanation of how the reasons lead to the conclusion (similar to, but not necessarily the same, as that above); and distinguish the main argument from the introductory text. Less than this should be assessed as broad understanding.

Page 6 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	8436	2

Evaluation

Assumptions

The argument does make use of two unstated, underlying assumptions. One is that the needs of parents and families is outweighed in importance by the needs of business. Only by making this assumption that it can be concluded that potential harm to a business '...should be the deciding factor', or that 'the way forward' is the harm test, etc. However, not everyone would accept that business does have priority in this way, and the assumption is therefore open to challenge – see further argument.

It is also assumed that the only way to keep businesses competitive etc. is to demand full-time working from staff in those businesses which may face problems. No other alternatives are considered. Again, it is simply concluded that the - by implication only - way forward is the harm test, with full-time work as the only solution for employees of firms that plead the special status. This conclusion could be challenged by suggesting alternatives – see further argument.

Strengths and weaknesses

Most of the premises give very weak support to the conclusion. Those that supposedly constitute the problems for business are no more than speculation: they are not factual. For example: firms may be unable to be family friendly; finding temporary staff may prove impossible; there could be penalties. Also the claim 'there would be inevitable resentment from childless people' is highly questionable, as there is nothing inevitable about it. Childless couples may turn out to be very understanding, or welcome the overtime. The author offers no evidence that this resentment occurs or has occurred.

The other main premise, given immediately before the conclusion, is also very weak. Of course we should not lose sight of the need for business to be competitive, etc., but that does not mean that we should ignore or dismiss family needs, as the conclusion clearly implies.

Despite these objections, the argument is not entirely unreasonable. It does make a fair point: if its prediction and assumptions are correct, and big problems do loom for business, then it is reasonable to conclude that firms should be offered some protection from staff wanting time off for their families, and a harm test would be one way to achieve this. The argument may not be a convincing one, but it is not unsupportable; and further arguments can be brought to endorse it – see below.

Further argument

Some further argument arises naturally from the evaluation, for example from the point that business is not necessarily more important than families. If firms risk losing a few orders, for instance, is that not a price worth paying for the welfare of a loyal employee's child? This line could be developed, and made to 'backfire' on the argument by saying the children of today's employees are employees of the future, and that business itself depends on their upbringing, etc.

Another line of further argument could be built from the qualifying use of 'may' or 'could' in many of the premises, allowing alternative scenarios to be considered. Maybe, for instance, small firms can be family-friendly; this is perfectly consistent with saying that they may not. Maybe contracts will not be lost. Maybe penalties would not be imposed. Maybe regulations could be brought in to protect firms from penalties where they are affected by staff having babies. If the argument can rest on possible outcomes (as it does), so can a counter-argument.

Page 7 of 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	AS Level Examinations - June 2002	8436	2

It could be pointed out that the argument does not consider any alternatives to full time working, such as subsidies, insurance schemes, crèche arrangements, home working, more flexible working patterns, etc. This suggests that such alternatives would be a line of further argument.

Another further argument could be developed from the first premise, which states that small firms rely on dedicated staff. If staff needs are not met with sympathy and understanding by firms, their dedication may well dwindle. The largely one-sided and unsympathetic measure proposed in the argument could well back-fire and result in the same loss of productivity because of tired and/or disaffected staff forced to work full time, and look after their families, etc.

On a slightly different tack, it could be argued that denying the employees of small firms the same conditions that the employees of big firms can enjoy is unjust, and may cause resentment.

In support of the argument there are also a number of points that can be made. For example, if small firms have to give way to family needs, and do face losses as a result, they may fail altogether and put all the staff out of work. Another argument could be that if couples both want to work they shouldn't have children; or if they do have children they should be willing to sacrifice one of their two incomes for the sake of their families. More generally, it could be claimed that it is not the responsibility of firms to cater to family needs: that is a personal responsibility.

The above points are examples of the type of further reasoning which could be brought, either for or against the passage. It is not an exhaustive list, and credit should be given for any other relevant arguments raised.