

Examiners' Reports

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J445/R/11

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Humanities (J445)

EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Content	Page
Chief Examiner's Report	1
Unit B031 Cross-Curricular Themes	2
Unit B032 Application of Knowledge	4
Unit B033 Humanities Independent Enquiry: Controlled Assessment	6

Chief Examiner's Report

In general terms the examination of the first full cohort to undertake the totality of this specification was achieved with commendable success.

All three elements of the assessment showed evidence that well prepared candidates could achieve results at the highest level. At the same time all three elements identified areas where improvements could be made. These have been developed in the individual reports on each element of the assessment.

The major target for Cross-Curricular Themes (Unit B031) should be to ensure that all candidates are aware of what they are required to do in each section of each question. Crucially B031 is the knowledge - based element of the assessment. Candidates need to have a command of the content of the specification if they are to be successful. This is particularly relevant to the questions in section (a) which call for detailed knowledge of the key concepts identified in the specification.

Application of skills (Unit B032) is precisely what it says. Candidates should be guided to use the sources provided not only as information to be deployed in their answers, but more importantly to display the skills, identified in the specification, of how to challenge and interrogate source material to draw conclusions about validity, reliability and bias.

The Controlled Assessment (Unit B033) was extremely well handled by most centres. It was the element of the assessment that caused the most trepidation for those attending training for the specification. The successful way that research enquiries were structured by many centres aided the process of moderation enormously.

There will once again be training sessions available for centres in November of 2011. These are extremely helpful for new centres embarking on the specification and are equally designed to meet the needs of established centres going forward.

Unit B031 Cross-Curricular Themes

General Comments

There was a much larger entry for this paper than in 2010. This was the first full cohort as the specification only became available for teaching in September 2009.

In general terms the questions seemed at the appropriate level for most candidates. The questions based on the key concepts, section (a) in questions 1 to 4, were possibly the weakest area of response. These concepts are clearly listed in the specification content but there was considerable evidence that some candidates had difficulty in providing relevant information. In contrast the extraction questions, section (b) in questions 1 to 4, were answered extremely well by candidates of all abilities.

The essay questions, section (c) in questions 1 to 4, were answered more successfully than last year and on the legacy specification. This was largely due to the scaffolding made available by the bullet points which helped many candidates to structure their answers more effectively. It should be noted that the bullet points are not a requirement for answering the questions and it was pleasing to see some more able candidates either using their own structure or adding to the existing structure.

It is possible that some candidates took this unit in the first year of Key Stage 4. Cross-Curricular Themes is a unit which requires candidates to know a considerable number of topics from a range of subject areas if they are to achieve their potential. The problem of coming to terms with the volume of information candidates need to learn and internalise over a relatively short period of time is challenging. The maturity of candidates' approaches to examinations are expected to develop throughout the course. It is anticipated that candidates' responses to the demands of this unit should become more sophisticated over time.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1 Issues of Citizenship

- (a) (i) Few candidates made the connection that multicultural society is about acceptance of diversity and focused on diversity within an area with appropriate examples.
- (a) (ii) Many candidates stated that Human rights were an entitlement for all. Specific examples were often vague.
- (b) Most candidates were successful in extracting the differences between statute and common law. Identifying the three elements of Parliament was more challenging.
- (c) Most candidates attempted to use the scaffolding in the question to structure their answer. Their success in doing this largely depended on the depth of their knowledge. It was clear that many candidates knew little about due legal process beyond the prompts in the question.

Question 2 Issues of Economic Wellbeing and Financial Capability

- (a) (i) Financial Reward was not well done by many candidates. There were a significant number of candidates who did not attempt a response. Bonus, pay rise and interest on savings were common responses.
- (a) (ii) A similar result to (i) for financial risk.
- (b) Most candidates extracted well.
- (c) The decline of secondary industry was frequently linked to moving companies overseas as a cost saving exercise. A significant number also appreciated the impact of mechanisation. Feminisation of work force and work/life balance were often weak.

Question 3 Environmental Issues

- (a) (i) Most candidates showed good knowledge. Nuclear power was a problem for some who put it in both renewable and finite resources.
- (a) (ii) As for (i).
- (b) Generally well answered – some tried to put the statements into their own words instead of simply extracting from the source; this was not always successful.
- (c) Candidates sometimes lost sight of the question and turned their answers into an explanation of the causes of climate change which limited the credit their answers could attain. Natural climate change and climate change doubters were weak for a number of candidates.

Question 4 Religious and Moral Issues

- (a) (i) Few candidates appear to fully understand what worship means and involves. Many simply gave examples of places of worship.
- (a) (ii) A similar comment could be made about Holy scripture. Many simply cited examples of holy books from one or more of the main world religions.
- (b) Many candidates scored well on b(i). b(ii) was less well answered and some candidates spoiled their answer by misquoting the source as stating God was evil.
- (c) Whilst most candidates knew the Christian/Jewish/Muslim Creation myths, very few actually understood the 'big - bang theory' for the creation of the Universe. Many wrote about the collision of rocks/meteors. Evolution was similarly defined as 'we are descended from monkeys'.

Question 5 Issues of Health and Welfare

- (a)(i)to(iv) Most candidates scored quite well on these questions.
- (b) A major problem for many candidates with this question is the way the marks are allocated between the Assessment Objectives. Many candidates wrote reasonable narrative answers but failed to utilise the information from the documents on the paper to support their answers. The mark scheme does recognise implicit use of the sources but rewards candidates who clearly cite from the documents at appropriate points in their answer more highly.

Centres are encouraged to use the mark scheme for this question, and the other questions on the paper, to familiarise candidates with what they need to do to achieve the top marks.

Unit B032 Application of Knowledge

General Comments

There was a much larger entry for this paper than in 2010. This was the first full cohort as the specification only became available for teaching in September 2009.

In general terms the questions were at the appropriate level for most candidates. The paper differentiated quite well as a full range of answers were seen. There was scope for the able candidates to show what they know, understand and can do.

The extraction questions 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 were generally successfully attempted by a large number of candidates. The skills based questions 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 12 had a more mixed response. There was evidence that candidates were not utilising the research skills each section demands. Each section is clearly identified, both in the specification and on the paper, with the types of skills which are required. Despite this many answers were narrative rather than analytical in approach. This was particularly true of questions 6 (a) and (b) where candidates had a tendency to write in generic terms about social research only loosely linking their answers to the specific type of research identified in the question.

It is possible that some candidates took this unit in the first year of Key Stage 4. Application of Knowledge is a unit which requires candidates to be able to apply wide ranging research skills on a number of previously unseen topics if they are to achieve their potential. Although not in itself a knowledge - based paper it does draw on the knowledge acquired in B031 which is unlikely to be complete by the time the paper is taken, if this is done in Year 10. The research skills and understanding required also develop over time as the candidate matures and becomes more sophisticated in dealing with the demands of the questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1 and 2 Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

3 Most candidates were able to make a statement about what a pacifist is. Some candidates were able to challenge the idea that those people opposed to the war were not pacifists and were able to use the documents to support their discussion. Many candidates failed to identify both the conditions needed for a Just War/personal concerns for loved ones.

4 Many candidates were able to make a general statement about the attitudes in the two documents. They were also able to develop a statement and include information from the sources such as the rules to justify the Afghan situation/quote figures from Document C. Few candidates attempted to address the different nature of the two documents.

5 This question elicited a good range of responses from candidates. The best candidates were able to give reasons to both agree and disagree with the statements clearly citing evidence from the sources. A few candidates were able to question the rigour of the research and its limitations.

Section B

- 6 (a) A significant number of candidates appeared to be unaware of participant observation as a basis for social research and their responses were generic rather than specific limiting them to Level 1. A small minority of candidates were able to produce a balanced statement that indicated good knowledge of relevant strengths and weaknesses.
- 6 (b) The number of candidates producing specific responses was higher. There was still evidence that many candidates were not really aware of the meaning of 'media' in relation to social research. Examples of different types of media were rarely given and the analysis was disappointingly superficial. Some candidates appeared to lack the skills essential to achieve the higher levels.

Section C

- 7 and 8 Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.
- 9 Both sub questions were usually answered correctly but, surprisingly for an extraction question, a number of candidates did choose the wrong profession.
- 10 Most candidates produced a developed statement about the costs and benefits to consider in deciding whether or not to go to university. A significant number of candidates were able to score highly.
- 11 The core of this question is to invite candidates to challenge the document presented and point out the limitation of relying on one account. Many candidates failed to do this and simply reported what the document says and how that would/would not be useful.
- 12 Candidates' scores in this question depend on their use of information in the documents to develop arguments for and against the question. Most candidates made some use of the documents though a proportion of candidates did limit themselves by making an argument only for or against. A smaller group limited themselves more severely by ignoring the documents completely and writing their own opinions with little factual support.

Unit B033 Humanities Independent Enquiry: Controlled Assessment

General Comments

There was a much larger entry for this paper than in 2010. This was the first full cohort as the specification only became available for teaching in September 2009.

The change from coursework to controlled assessment has had a major impact on the nature of the work that candidates have submitted. The quantity of work has, of necessity, been much reduced and it has also become more uniform with the format of candidates' work within a centre being structured in a very similar way. This has aided the moderation process in two major ways. Firstly the work presented is much more manageable for moderators. Secondly it aids the moderator in the process of moderation by facilitating a much more direct comparison of how each candidate has met the Assessment Objectives.

It is possible that some candidates submitted this unit in the first year of Key Stage 4. The Controlled Assessment unit requires candidates to be able to apply wide ranging research skills on a selected topic. It shares these skills with unit B032 Application of Knowledge. This overlap means that there should be some benefit for candidates in working on the two units at the same time. The research skills and understanding also develop over time as the candidate matures and becomes more sophisticated in dealing with the application of the skills to the chosen topic.

Assessment Objective 2c Reach reasoned conclusions

The crucial issue with this AO is to encourage candidates to make their conclusions explicit and support them with specific evidence drawn from their research. Too often candidates assume that the moderator will identify this support without such specificity. This then restricts the candidate to a maximum of Level 2, 4 marks. Centres should guide and encourage all candidates to support their conclusions with direct quotation from the evidence they have collected to enable them to access the higher levels of the marking criteria. It is quite acceptable for candidates to be made aware of these marking criteria.

Assessment Objective 3a Research Methodology

As with 2c it is important that candidates make the methodology they choose, and the reasons why they have chosen it, explicit. The volume of research which can be undertaken is constrained by the timeframe within which the Controlled Assessment must be produced. Candidates must therefore focus on appropriate methods of researching the topic they have selected. A mix of primary and secondary research is essential. Evidence that this research has actually been done and has impacted on the finished report is crucial.

Assessment Objective 3b Locate, select and organise material relevant to the enquiry.

Given the time constraints the importance of the word 'relevant' is difficult to overstate. Equally important is the need to organise the relevant information to address the needs of the report. The amount of evidence collected will often not be extensive therefore the quality of selection and the use of techniques to present it is paramount.

Assessment Objective 3c Record and present findings

The success with which candidates address this AO depends on a number of variables including the quality of the evidence gathered and the candidate's own intrinsic facility with the English language. Most centres do work within the parameters of the prescribed word limit.

Assessment Objective 3d Evaluate the research methodology

The traditional weakness in this process are the candidates who focus on what has been done rather than on how well the methodology identified has delivered the required information. There is evidence that centres are working hard to address this. This has almost certainly been helped by the introduction of the Controlled Assessment process. The limitation on the almost endless research that candidates used to produce for coursework assignments has helped to focus minds to address the process of actually evaluating.

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