

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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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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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Humanities (J445)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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Unit B031 Cross-curricular Themes

General Comments:

There was a similar entry for this paper as in 2011.

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 much better done this year with the outstanding exception of Omnipotence. Candidates either knew this or did not, though some determined candidates attempted to work out what it meant with varied degrees of success. The concepts are all listed in the syllabus content but there was still some evidence that some candidates were struggling to find three relevant statements. As in 2011, the extraction questions, section (b) in questions 1 to 4, were answered extremely well by candidates of all abilities.

The improvement in responses to the essay questions, section (c) in questions 1 to 4, was maintained from 2011. An increasing number of candidates had been taught how to respond to these questions through the scaffolding made available by the bullet points. Many candidates, of all abilities, were successful structuring 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.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Issues of Citizenship

- 1 (a) (i) Most candidates responded with general statements about courts, judges and juries, fairness and innocent until proved guilty. However a relatively large number of answers implied that anyone involved in a trial was guilty of something.
- 1 (a) (ii) Many candidates' responses to Appeals were more limited and variable. Some did not link the two concepts writing about appeals in a general sense. Those who linked the two still showed less detailed knowledge.
- 1 (b) Most candidates were successful in extracting the freedom of speech/expression. The right to a private life was less successful. The grounds on which courts might issue an injunction were more widely achieved.
- 1 (c) Most candidates attempted to use the scaffolding in the question to structure their answer. The success in doing this largely depended on the depth of their knowledge. The most successful answers tended to deal with each point separately, develop a statement and move to the next. Less successful answers ran the bullet points together with a loss of clarity about the structure of the argument. The temptation to move into more contentious areas in this answer was resisted by the vast majority of candidates.

Issues of Economic Wellbeing and Financial Capability

- 2 (a) (i) Tertiary industry was not as well done by many candidates as might have been expected. There were a number of candidates who said it was the third sector of industry after primary and secondary without development. Most candidates were comfortable to define and exemplify this sector.
- 2 (a) (ii) The most common mistake made with e-commerce was to assume that the 'e' stood for environment rather than electronic. Some sound answers were seen.
- 2 (b) Most candidates extracted well but a number are still confused about employees and employers leading to a number of mistakes in (ii).
- 2 (c) A minority of candidates confused MNCs with NGOs doing development work but most followed the scaffolding well and many produced thoughtful responses.

Environmental Issues

- 3 (a) (i) Many candidates showed good knowledge. Pressure groups were sometimes too closely linked to the environment and not described in general terms.
- 3 (a) (ii) Some good responses were seen. The most successful candidates were able to comment that while human impact in the past had generally been negative there were currently some attempts to mitigate the historical mistakes.
- 3 (b) Probably the least well answered extraction questions. Some candidates found it difficult to extract the answers clearly enough to score maximum marks.
- 3 (c) Some candidates found it difficult to keep the different threads of the answer distinct which led to some repetition of the impacts that each could/would make to the pace of climate change. Very few candidates dealt with the possibility that some of these developments might produce positive outcomes.

Religious and Moral Issues

- 4 (a) (i) As previously stated Omnipotence was this year's unknown concept. There were a lot of candidates who did know, but far too many no response answers.
- 4 (a) (ii) Heaven was quite the opposite. However, detailed correct comment was at a premium.
- 4 (b) Many candidates scored well on (i) and (ii).
- 4 (c) Most candidates knew a great deal about relative attitudes to human sexual relationships. Promiscuity was not a well understood concept and produced some interesting definitions. Adultery was also sometimes cited as older people's attitudes.

Issues of Health and Welfare

5 (a) (i) –

5 (a) (iv) Most candidates scored well on these questions.

5 (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 did not 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. In terms of the narrative there was a strong underlying theme that the British Welfare State was good.

Unit B032 Application of Knowledge

General Comments:

There was a similar entry for this paper as in 2011.

In general terms the questions were at the appropriate level for most candidates. The paper differentiated quite well as a full range of answers was seen. There was scope for all the 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. There was a noticeable improvement in the responses to questions 6 (a) and (b). Candidates in general wrote better than last year linking their answers more closely to the specific type of research identified in the question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Analyse and Interpret Different Types of Evidence

1&

2 Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

3 Most candidates were able to make a statement about the reasons we will never know why the vote was no. Some candidates concentrated on the opposition to the yes vote referring to the press, the PM and a well organised no campaign. To achieve full marks they needed to refer to the confidentiality of the voting system.

4 Many candidates were able to make a general statement about the link between the two documents. They were able to develop a statement using the data in Source C to support the Independents stand on the current voting system and the way it discourages voters from turning out. Few candidates attempted to address the different nature of the two documents.

5 This question elicited a poor range of responses from candidates. Many candidates confused the 2005 General Election and the referendum stating that Tony Blair was the PM opposed to the yes vote. Few were able to give reasons to both agree and disagree with the statement clearly citing evidence from the sources. A few candidates were able to question the rigour of the research and its limitations.

Section B

Using Different Types and Forms of Evidence

- 6 (a) A significant number of candidates were able to produce a balanced statement indicating good knowledge of relevant strengths and weaknesses of using secondary sources for social research. Much improved on last year.
- 6 (b) The number of candidates producing specific responses was high. Some candidates suggested that in-depth interviews could be used as frequently as you wished. Most concentrated on the different types of evidence you could obtain, the time constraint, the pressure on the interviewee, and the difficulties in extrapolating the evidence into a usable format.

Section C

Assess the Reliability and Utility of Evidence and Reach Reasoned Conclusions

- 7 Almost 100% success rate.
- 8 Most candidates did not identify the correct answer – Directives.
- 9 Both benefits were usually identified correctly.
- 10 Most candidates produced a statement about the impact of the ECHR on the way laws are made in Britain. Few candidates were able to develop their answer.
- 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 did not do this and simply reported what the document said and how that would/would not be useful. A small but growing number of candidates are now challenging the statements.
- 12 Candidate 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:

Overall the quality of responses from the candidates continues to improve as they and the teachers become more accustomed to the rigours of controlled assessment. There were a number of responses which showed consistent analysis, a clear and sometimes sophisticated style and an ability to consider and judge alternative explanations. It was pleasing to see evidence that candidates had thought in detail about their evaluations and conclusions. The best responses were supported with careful analysis. Most candidates who tended to do well recognised the need to be precise in their methodology. This often allows a candidate to find areas of strength and weakness quite easily. The analysis is then in most cases quite straightforward. Unfortunately, some did not use evidence from their investigations to back up their conclusions. This means much of the last part of the work becomes an opinionated set of statements, which carry little or no credit on the mark scheme. Over-crediting opinionated statements, however lucid, is still the major area of over-marking by centres. This is an issue which is still, and probably always will be, conceptually difficult for candidates to grasp and this can make marking complex and difficult to award in the right place. The main issue is, in terms of the criteria in this specification, conclusions are basically what can be said about the results gathered. Evaluations are about the way the research was handled by the candidate and how this could be improved.

In terms of preparing for controlled assessment as well as aiding the marking and moderation process, it definitely does help, if the evaluation and conclusion are, where possible, at the end of the work, not spread throughout it. In terms of the application of appropriate research methodology, here the candidate is expected to justify why a particular method has been selected and show they know how to carry out an investigation, using the methods chosen. It is a good idea, where possible, to discuss a methodology which though considered at the beginning, was subsequently rejected including detailed reasons why. This is a very good way of moving up the methodology mark scheme. Be aware, however, as often mentioned in the past axiomatic methodology analysis does not always generate high levels of credit. A questionnaire cannot be improved by asking more than the five you asked, as really that is not what really constitutes a questionnaire in the first place. Also, be wary of interviews that are really questionnaires which have not been answered by enough people. An interview by its very nature should allow the respondent to elaborate on the response they wish to give not be limited by a narrow range of options.

In short, overall some of the responses were excellent with detailed investigations covering both sides of an often complex debate. Others needed to develop a more detailed, balanced investigation in order to achieve high marks. Some centres also included large amounts of repeat questionnaires, this is not necessary, copies of the questions asked in the investigation, along with graphic summaries of the findings will suffice. The inclusion of large amounts of secondary data does also need to be watched as the word count is meant to encourage the candidate to focus down onto the issues involved in carrying out an investigation. Selection from sources and a bibliography is much more appropriate. Detailed advice is available in the controlled assessment guide available from the OCR website. Many of you will see elements of the methodology employed in your school – the advice is based on the best practice from a range of schools adapted to the new criteria.

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