

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

Paper 9239/11
Written Examination 11

Key Messages

Candidates should ensure they read the paper carefully, looking at the key words, in order to answer the questions set. This was particularly relevant in **Question 2**, where several candidates described the strengths and weaknesses of the argument, rather than providing a judgement as to the convincing nature of the argument.

The length of each answer should reflect the number of marks available. Some candidates spent too long on **Question 1**, leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3**, which was worth almost half of the total available marks for this paper.

To gain higher marks in **Questions 2** and **3** there should be clear development of the points made. This may relate to the impact of material in the documents on the arguments. It may also show consideration of, not just **what** a strength or weakness may be, but also **how** or **why** it is a strength or weakness.

Candidates should provide brief and relevant references from the documents to support their evaluation of evidence and argument otherwise the answer is generalised, containing only assertions or claims. They should also explain what impact this has on the argument or chosen evidence, which goes beyond a generic statement like “weakens/strengthens”. They need to explain how the assessment does this.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content in order to evaluate the sources, perspectives and arguments to reach an overall judgement regarding which, if any, was stronger.

In **Question 3**, the strongest responses reached a supported judgement about the relative strength of both arguments. Weaker responses simply compared the content of the two documents.

Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without any relevant supporting comment, except when asked to identify in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit.

General Comments

There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the documents and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. Some candidates did not pay careful enough attention to the command words in the questions (e.g. ‘convincing’) in **Question 2**. Overall, there were some good and very good answers to **Question 2**.

It was encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the arguments put forward in the documents in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement of whether which, if either, was stronger. However, many candidates simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the arguments of the authors. Stronger answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner.

Some candidates ran out of time. The allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. Many candidates spent too much time on **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)** where a few lines would have been enough. This had a detrimental impact on the amount of time spent, particularly, on **Question 3** that was worth nearly half of the total marks.

In **Question 1(a) and 1(b)(i)** where the command word is ‘identify’ candidates could look to be more concise and accurate. The best answers simply take the wording of the author by using quotations whilst paraphrasing can confuse the point being made.

In **Question 1(b)** some candidates combined both **parts (i) and (ii)** into the same answer. Although this was not penalised, for clarity, the two parts would be separated.

Some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise references to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents and evaluated their significance and impact on the argument. This demonstrated that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being presented. Stronger responses also reached a supported judgement of the relative strength of the two documents either as a conclusion, or throughout the answer.

The rubric of the paper requires candidates to write in continuous prose. While concise answers in **Question 1** are acceptable in **Questions 2 and 3** full paragraphing, rather than bullet points should be used.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) As an ‘identify’ question the best answers simply and concisely stated the words of the author without paraphrasing or expanding. **Question 1** provides an encouragement for the candidate to fully read and digest the detail of Document 1. The key words were ‘organisations that have recently changed their attitude to tattoos’. This referred to specific organisations, like ‘...the Marines and the Army National Guard’ or ‘UK police’ rather than generic terms like: ‘...fire, police and the military’
- (b) (i) This was also an “identify” question so two simple statements showing opposing attitudes to tattoos were required: ‘...youth **admire** tattoos and body modifications” and ‘...older people **dislike** them” were appropriate. In this part there is no requirement to explain these points. Most candidates correctly identified these, or similar points. Two attitudes opposed to tattoos were also accepted, like: ‘For many leaders of these services, tattoos still mean **unprofessional**’ and ‘older Americans **dislike** tattoos (because they show deviance)’.
- (ii) This question required explanation of one of the attitudes identified in **(b)(i)**. Explanation requires the candidate to show clear understanding of the authors’ meaning by using their own words and interpretation or paraphrasing the words of the author. Simply copying verbatim from the document is not considered to be explanation.

An example of a 2-mark answer: (Context and impact)

‘Older Americans dislike tattoos because there is prejudice involved. They believe that tattoos tell them something about the person that wears them. This ‘something’ used to be associated with the people who used to wear them (criminals and social outcasts). Their dislike for them is rooted in discrimination from the past.’

An example of a 1-mark answer: (Context only)

‘Back in the day, having a tattoo would not be seen on any person. It was usually “bad” people like criminals that had them.’

Question 2

It was important in **Question 2** to read the requirements of the question carefully. The question required an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the author’s argument in the context of how convincing it was. To gain high marks on this question, candidates needed to give a judgement on how convincing the argument was. Many omitted to do this in a clear way.

The highest achieving candidates recognised that the best approach to answer the question was to evaluate points such as: the credibility and reliability of the author to put forward an appropriate argument, the credibility of evidence, sources and examples used and the convincing nature, or otherwise, of the structure and language used in the document. Most were able to at least partially develop these points.

The difference between higher and moderately scoring candidates was usually defined by the appropriate explanation of points being made. Many candidates made basic statements without explaining or developing them. Recognising that the author is a lecturer in sociology at a well-known American university is a valid point. It would be strengthened by explaining that this makes him a credible source and he, and his university, have reputations to uphold. This means his argument is likely to be truthful and, indeed, also fact checked through peer review.

For strengths of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'...the fact that the author teaches sociology strengthens the reasons presented as he has exact and precise knowledge to interpret the negative impact of banning taboos in our societies and the positive results that a change of this perspective may bring. The article was not only published by a reputable source, the University of Minnesota, but also introduces a great number of cited academic sources to cross-check the evidence presented.'

A further example of strengths used by higher achieving candidates, including reference to how convincing the argument is:

'The author's argument is convincing because he uses the opinion of a British police chairman, Ian Pointon, who is likely to have first-hand experience of the effects of tattoos in the police force and their influence on the public.'

This does not just identify the source but explains why Pointon is credible and offers a specific perspective.

For weaknesses of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'The author makes an assertion based on Ian Pointon's argument that "tattoos can break down barriers with the public" without providing first hand evidence of this. It is merely an opinion without evidence. This undermines the strength of the author's argument. Furthermore, the author does not provide context for the survey that is referenced in paragraph four. There is no date of when this research took place or how many people were surveyed'

Question 3

The overall standard of response to **Question 3** has continued to improve. The most frequent approach is to directly compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two documents throughout the answer. The strongest candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each document. There was no correct answer and candidates were free to argue that Document 1 or Document 2 was stronger or that both were equally strong. The strongest assessed all three outcomes before giving a final judgement. Some candidates tended to directly compare the content of the documents without evaluating their relative strengths. This simplistic/undeveloped approach, which describes a few points comparing the two documents, is a Level 1 answer.

Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. Candidates achieving the highest marks gave clear examples from the documents and their impact on the overall assessment, while lower scoring answers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without using supporting examples. Such answers were consequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text.

A small number discussed the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempted to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgement as to which was stronger. This approach was only partially successful for these candidates as the more sophisticated evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope.

Both approaches saw lower scoring candidates feature much more narrative descriptions in their answer, particularly quoting extensively from what the authors stated rather than undertaking evaluation of the strength of the arguments. This limited the marks that could be credited.

This does not show clear evaluation of the arguments but rather merely states the differences between the two. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to use evidence from the documents to evaluate how the authors have arrived at these statements and to explain its impact on the assessment.

Some candidates referred to their answer to **Question 2** by assuming that the points made would be carried forward into **Question 3**. There is a distinct difference between the two questions as **Question 3** looks at the relative strengths. So, for example, making a direct comparison between the authors' credibility is necessary to gain higher marks. A strength stated in **Question 2** is only relevant for that author, it does not show relative strength.

Some candidates evaluated the theme of the argument in terms of their own attitudes to tattoos. This is not appropriate, as the question requires evaluation of the authors' arguments.

The strongest responses adopted the first approach to answering the question: methodically evaluating the relative strengths of the argument (with intermediate judgements), using appropriate examples and analysis of impact, before coming to a reasoned judgment at the end. For example:

'Ozungwu (Doc 2) takes a very personal approach as she gives examples of what she has experienced in her life giving her credibility and first-hand evidence. She also uses examples of what her close friends go through in more developed countries in relation to tattoos and how they may be discriminated against. This gives a personal perspective which may be more convincing, whereas, Strohecker (Doc 1) does not go to this level. Instead, he only considers a high-ranking policeman, not the person on the street. Therefore, document 2's use of evidence is stronger.'

This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the authors in relation to sources of evidence.

'However, Document 1 has stronger aspects. Strohecker is a University professor which suggests that he should have knowledge and access to research into people's behaviour and perspectives. He has more credibility than Ozungwu (Doc 2) who is described as a writer, but with no specific statement of her status. Document 1 has a stronger appeal to authority.'

This gives a clear, opposite viewpoint with another intermediate judgement.

Some candidates seemed to be looking for a formulaic approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the documents clearly. Candidates are required to engage critically with the documents, rather than make generalised comments that could apply to any document.

Some candidates scored less well on **Question 3** as they appeared to be limited by time as the structure of the answer appeared rushed or incomplete. Care should be taken to allocate time appropriately, especially in **Question 1** according to the number of marks available for each question.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

Paper 9239/12
Written Examination 12

Key Messages

Candidates should ensure they read the paper carefully, looking at the key words, in order to answer the questions set. This was particularly relevant in **Question 2** where the question required candidates to assess the strength and weakness of the **evidence** and judge how convincing this was. Encouragingly, most candidates addressed the question of evidence rather than just concentrating, incorrectly, on the argument which has been the case in previous series.

The length of each answer should reflect the number of marks available. Some candidates spent too long on **Question 1** leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3** which was worth almost half of the total available marks for this paper.

To gain higher marks in **Questions 2** and **3**, there should be clear development of the points made. This may relate to the impact of material in the documents on the arguments. It may also show consideration of, not just **what** a strength or weakness may be, but also **how** or **why** it is a strength or weakness.

Candidates should provide brief and relevant references from the documents to support their evaluation of evidence and argument. Otherwise, the answer is generalised, containing only assertions or claims. They should also explain what impact this has on the argument or chosen evidence which goes beyond a generic statement like “weakens/strengthens”. They need to explain how the assessment does this.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content in order to evaluate the sources, perspectives and arguments to reach an overall judgment regarding which, if any, was stronger.

In **Question 3**, the strongest responses reached a supported judgement about the relative strength of both the two arguments. Weaker responses simply compared the content of the two documents.

Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without any relevant supporting comment, except when asked to identify in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit.

General Comments

There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the documents and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. Some candidates did not pay careful enough attention to the command words in the questions e.g. “convincing” and “evidence” in **Question 2**. Overall, there were some good and very good answers to **Question 2**.

It was encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the arguments put forward in the documents in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement of which, if either, was stronger. However, several candidates simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the arguments of the authors. Higher scoring answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner.

Some candidates ran out of time. The allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. Some candidates spent too much time on **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)** where a few lines would have been enough. This had a detrimental impact on the amount of time spent, particularly, on **Question 3** that was worth nearly half of the total marks.

In **Question 1** where the command word is 'identify', candidates could look to be more concise and accurate. The best answers simply take the wording of the author with quotations whilst paraphrasing can confuse the point being made.

Some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise references to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents and evaluated their significance and impact on the argument. This demonstrated that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being presented. Stronger responses also reached a supported judgment of the relative strength of the two documents either as a conclusion, or more usually, throughout the answer.

The rubric of the paper requires candidates to write in continuous prose. While concise answers in **Question 1** are acceptable in **Questions 2** and **3** full paragraphing, rather than bullet points should be used.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) As an 'identify' question the best answers simply and concisely stated the words of the author without paraphrasing or expanding. **Question 1** provides an encouragement for the candidate to fully read and digest the detail of Document 1. The key words were 'two different partners.' Most were able to clearly state, the government and the private sector or non-governmental sector. An example of a clear answer is: 'Afghanistan's government and the private sector must work together to prevent Afghanistan from failing.'
- (b) This was an 'identify and explain' question. Most candidates took each action separately, identified and explained it. Some give both identified actions first and then explain them. Generally, this takes more time and can lead to repetition or confusion if the explanation is covered separately. The answer required some synthesis of the authors' ideas. Explanation requires the candidate to show clear understanding of the authors' meaning by using their own words and interpretation or paraphrasing the words of the author. Simply copying verbatim from the document is not considered to be an explanation.

An example of a 2-mark answer:

'The author of Document 1 states that the Afghan government should increase modern leadership within the ministry and department level. (Identify). This will allow problems to be solved faster as the time is not spent informing the president about the issue, and decision can be made by other people at Ministry level.' (Explain).

An example of a 1-mark answer:

'Government must make the rules for registering business through AISA easier and less complicated so that is easier for businesses to be built in Afghanistan.'

This identifies the action that can be taken but the explanation is too vague, not showing how or why this would make a difference.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered with most candidates correctly assessing the evidence rather than simply the argument. It was pleasing to see in **Question 2** that candidates had generally read the requirements of the question carefully. The question required an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the evidence used by the author. To gain high marks on this question, candidates needed to give a judgement on how convincing the argument was. Some omitted to do this in a clear way.

The highest achieving candidates recognised that the author used expert sources, for example, The World Bank and Wall Street Journal and explained why they had authority. More specific evidence was also sourced, and the higher scoring candidates recognised this, named the sources and explained why they were reliable. This three-stage approach tends to lead to higher marks.

For weaknesses, higher scoring candidates saw that there were some sweeping statements regarding 'Government not being good at business' and 'corruption in government is the biggest internal threat'. Both statements are assertions, presented as fact, but are unsupported by evidence.

The difference between higher and moderately scoring candidates was usually defined by the appropriate explanation of points being made. Many candidates made basic statements without explaining or developing them. Recognising that the Wall Street Journal is a reliable source is a valid point. It would be strengthened by explaining why this is the case. Some reference to upholding the reputation of a globally known journal and a fact checking process would strengthen the answer.

For strengths of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'The author uses some credible sources. He states information from "The World Bank". This is a well-known international organisation with a vested interest to provide accurate information to maintain its reputation. Using quotes from the Wall Street Journal also makes it less likely that the author has manipulated the evidence.'

For weaknesses of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'In his introductory paragraph, Dr Hotak makes many assertions such as "the country (Afghanistan) has a young multilingual population with two-thirds under the age of 25...and if the economy fails it is because the government is never good at business..." Such declarations come unsupported by any reference to previous factual evidences making them seem like facts born out of Dr Hotak's own imagination rather than emerging from an authentic source.'

Question 3

The overall standard of response to **Question 3** has continued to improve. The most frequent approach is to directly compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two documents throughout the answer. The strongest candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each document. There was no correct answer and candidates were free to argue that Document 1 or Document 2 was stronger or that both were equally strong. The strongest assessed all three outcomes before giving a final judgement. Some candidates tended to directly compare the content of the documents without evaluating their relative strengths. This simplistic/undeveloped approach which describes a few points comparing the two documents is a Level 1 answer.

Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. Candidates achieving the highest marks gave clear examples from the documents and their impact on the overall assessment, while lower scoring answers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without using supporting examples. Such answers were consequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text.

Lower scoring answers tend to feature narrative description in their answer, particularly quoting extensively from what the authors stated rather than undertaking evaluation of the strength of the arguments. This limited the marks that could be credited. This does not show clear evaluation of the arguments but rather merely states the differences between the two. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to use evidence from the documents to evaluate how the authors have arrived at these statements and to explain its impact on the assessment.

The strongest responses adopted a systematic approach to answering the question: methodically evaluating the relative strengths of the argument (with intermediate judgements), using appropriate examples and analysis of impact, before coming to a reasoned judgement at the end. For example:

'Both articles cite some valid sources to strengthen their arguments. Document 1 uses The World Bank and the Wall Street Journal to illustrate the negative view of Afghanistan's business activity while Document 2 cites The World Trade Organisation to explain why aid is needed to improve trade. These cited sources can be checked for reliability and are also globally recognised organisations/agencies. Thus, both arguments are equally strong.'

This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the authors in relation to sources of evidence as well as a judgement.

'The author of Document 1 is an expert in the "Afghan economy being President of the British Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry" while the author of Document 2 is a freelance journalist. This allows Document 1 to have more credible evidence as the author has a better ability to choose the most appropriate reasons and evidence.' This makes Document 1 stronger. Having said that, the author of Document 1 has an inherent bias. He is also Chairman of the MAIH Group, "a consulting firm for International companies" It is in his interest to promote the private sector in Afghanistan. Mr Zaidi (Doc 2) is a journalist whose intentions would be to provide accurate information to maintain his news agency's reputation. This is a strength of Document 2.'

This gives a clear set of opposite viewpoints with further intermediate judgements.

Some candidates seemed to be looking for a formulaic approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the documents clearly. Candidates are required to engage critically with the documents, rather than make generalised comments that could apply to any document.

Some candidates scored less well on **Question 3** as they appeared to be limited by time as the structure of the answer appeared rushed or incomplete. Care should be taken to allocate time appropriately according to the number of marks available for each question.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

Paper 9239/13
Written Examination 13

Key Messages

The length of each answer should reflect the number of marks available. Some candidates spent too long on **Question 1** leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3**, which was worth almost half of the total available marks for this paper.

To gain higher marks in **Questions 2** and **3** there should be clear development of the points made. This may relate to the impact of material in the documents on the arguments. It may also show consideration of, not just **what** a strength or weakness may be, but also **how** or **why** it is a strength or weakness.

Candidates should provide brief and relevant references from the documents to support their evaluation of evidence and argument. Otherwise, the answer is generalised, containing only assertions or claims. They should also explain what impact this has on the argument or chosen evidence which goes beyond a generic statement like “weakens/strengthens”. They need to explain how the assessment does this.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content in order to evaluate the sources, perspectives and arguments to reach an overall judgement. The question asked - ‘To what extent does the author’s argument in Document 1 challenge the author’s argument in Document 2?’ As the documents covered the same topic, but from different perspectives, candidates needed to assess and support which, if either, challenged the other more effectively. It is important to look carefully at the question and understand this key word in the question.

In **Question 3** the higher scoring responses reached a supported judgement about the strength of the challenge. Lower scoring responses were frequently descriptive and simply compared the content of the two documents without addressing the challenge.

Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without any relevant supporting comment, except when asked to identify in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit.

General Comments

There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the documents and several showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. However, many candidates did not pay careful enough attention to the command words in the questions, especially “challenge” in **Question 3**.

It was encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the arguments put forward in the documents in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement of whether which, if either, was stronger. However, many candidates simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the arguments of the authors. Stronger answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner.

Some candidates ran out of time. The allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. Many candidates spent too much time on **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)** where a few lines would have been enough. This had a detrimental impact on the amount of time spent, particularly, on **Question 3** that was worth nearly half of the total marks.

In **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)** where the command word is ‘identify’, candidates could look to be more concise and accurate. The best answers simply take the wording of the author by using quotations, whereas paraphrasing can confuse the point being made.

Some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise references to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents and evaluated their significance and impact on the argument. This demonstrated that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being presented. Stronger responses also reached a supported judgement of the strength of the challenge either throughout the answer and/or as a conclusion.

The rubric of the paper requires candidates to write in continuous prose. While concise answers in **Question 1** are acceptable, in **Questions 2 and 3** full paragraphing, rather than bullet points, should be used.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) As an 'identify' question the best answers simply and concisely stated the words of the author without paraphrasing or expanding. **Question 1** provides an encouragement for the candidate to fully read and digest the detail of Document 1. It may be necessary to look throughout the document to find the relevant details. A typical answer was: 'Two groups of people who could prevent the trade of conflict-zone antiquities are archaeologists and border officials.' There were other possibilities, but care was needed to link to groups of people, not such things as "laws" or "The Hague Convention".
- (b) This was an 'identify and explain' question. Most candidates took each negative effect separately and identified and explained it. Some gave both identified negative effects first and then explained them. Generally, this takes more time and can lead to repetition or confusion if the explanation is covered separately. The answer required some synthesis of the author's ideas. Explanation requires the candidate to show clear understanding of the author's meaning by using their own words and interpretation or paraphrasing the words of the author. Simply copying verbatim from the document is not considered to be explanation.

An example of a 4-mark answer: (Both identified and explained)

'Two negative effects that the author warns about are: the indirect financing of armed groups (Identify) who could be looting and selling antiquities to financially support themselves and their illegal activities to buy supplies (Explain). There is also an increase of refugees and deaths that will occur if the conflict continues (Identify) leading to ethical issues that will have international consequences like increased migration. (Explain).'

An example of a 2-mark answer: (Both identified but not sufficiently explained)

'Provides finance for armed groups (Identify) in the Near East causing more violence. Refugee numbers are increasing drastically (Identify) due to increased violence in the Near East.'

Question 2

The highest achieving candidates recognised that the best approach to answer the question was to evaluate points such as: the credibility and reliability of the author to put forward an appropriate argument, the credibility of evidence, sources and examples used and the convincing nature, or otherwise, of the structure and language used in the document. Many were able to at least partially develop these points.

The difference between higher and moderately scoring candidates was usually defined by the appropriate explanation of points being made. Many candidates made basic statements without explaining or developing them. Recognising that the author is an archaeologist and a senior lecturer at a well-known UK University is a valid point. It would be strengthened by explaining that this makes him a credible source and he, and his university, have reputations to uphold. This means his argument is likely to be truthful despite being written in a non-academic journal.

Low scoring candidates frequently copied out the points made by the author without any assessment. This approach showed at most: little or no assessment of arguments; assessment, if any, was simplistic; evidence was identified, and weaknesses named. All these are Level 1 statements.

For strengths of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'Given that he is an archaeologist and senior lecturer in Near Eastern Archaeology we can assume that he is making an informed and reliable judgement on the issue. Furthermore, given his credentials, the author holds first-hand experience with antiquities dealers and traders as he noted about his visit in London.'

For weaknesses of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'Although the author provides a strong argument, he weakens it by making many assumptions with no evidential support. His evidence in ways is merely anecdotal, like "antiquities have become a major source of finance for armed groups" and does not completely support his argument. He acknowledges that there are no accurate figures and, by providing no quotations or other evidence he weakens his argument.'

'Another weakness is the limitation of the examples given. The sources of his examples, such as in "videos, photographs...huge" are not stated and therefore cannot be considered to be valid. Lots of his examples are based purely on suspicion, such as the example of armed groups, selling artefacts and his lack of statistics to support these claims.'

Both examples identify weaknesses, illustrate them from the text and identify the impact on the argument. This is a Level 3 skill.

Question 3

The most frequent approach is to directly compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two documents and how they challenge throughout the answer. The strongest candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each document. There was no correct answer and candidates were free to argue that Document 2 did or did not challenge Document 1 and to what extent. It was also possible to argue that neither effectively challenged the other. The highest scorers assessed all three outcomes before giving a final judgement.

Some candidates tended to directly compare the content of the documents without evaluating their relative strengths. This simplistic/undeveloped approach, which describes a few points comparing the two documents, is a Level 1 answer and so scored lower marks.

Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. Candidates achieving the highest marks gave clear examples from the documents and their impact on the overall assessment, while lower scoring answers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without using supporting examples or referencing the challenge. Such answers were consequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text.

A small number discussed the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempted to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgement as to which was the stronger. This approach was only partially successful for these candidates, as the more sophisticated evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope. This was possibly due to a lack of time.

Both approaches saw lower scoring candidates feature a more narrative description in their answer, particularly quoting extensively from what the authors stated rather than undertaking evaluation of the strength of the arguments or looking at the idea of a challenge. This limited the marks that could be credited.

This does not show clear evaluation of the arguments but rather, merely states the differences between the two. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to use evidence from the documents to evaluate how the authors have arrived at these statements and to explain its impact on the assessment.

Some candidates referred to their answer to **Question 2** by assuming that the points made would be carried forward into **Question 3**. There is a distinct difference between the two questions as **Question 3** looks at the relative strengths of the two documents and asks candidates to assess the extent of the challenge. So, for example, making a direct comparison between the authors' credibility is necessary to gain higher marks. A strength stated in **Question 2** is only relevant for that author, it does not show relative strength.

Some lower scoring candidates also just assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the argument in Document 2 with little or no reference to Document 1. This does not answer the question as it is looking for the challenge to one by the other.

The strongest responses adopted the first approach to answering the question: methodically evaluating the relative strengths of the argument (with intermediate judgements), using appropriate examples and analysis of impact, before coming to a reasoned judgment about the challenge at the end. For example:

'In Document 1, Altaweel in his introductory paragraphs argues that there is a huge problem of trading of antiquities in saying that it has "become a major source of finance for the parties involved". Document 2 challenges that by saying that the conflict is due to "shelling and bombing" and the "demolition of monuments" saying "This is clearly not the case" when referring to headlines suggesting that the trade of conflict zone antiquities is the major cause of the crisis. So, Document 2 challenges Document 1.'

This gives a developed evaluation of the way Document 2 challenges Document 1 by using specific examples from the text and explaining the impact on the argument.

'The authors agree on the idea of documenting artefacts. This can be seen as Altaweel's final solution solely suggests that documenting artefacts will lead to resolving the issue, suggesting that archaeologists "create lists of objects" then hand them to border officials. Document 2 says "Once an object is recorded, the chances of recovery improve enormously". Both agree that the issue can be resolved through documentation.'

This gives a clear, supported viewpoint where both authors have a similar argument so there is no challenge.

Some candidates seemed to be looking for a formulaic approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the documents clearly. Candidates are required to engage critically with the documents, rather than make generalised comments that could apply to any document. This was particularly clear with many not considering the idea of challenge.

As in **Question 2**, many candidates simply described what the authors stated and made no attempt to assess or evaluate the arguments. This is a significant area for improvement.

Some candidates scored less well on **Question 3**, worth almost half the marks, as they appeared to be limited by time as the structure of the answer appeared rushed or incomplete. Care should be taken to allocate time appropriately, particularly in **Question 1**, according to the number of marks available for each question.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

Paper 9239/02
Paper 2

Key messages

- It is essential that both teachers and candidates are familiar with and fully understand the assessment criteria and syllabus aims.
- The choice of essay question must provide opportunities to develop globally contrasting perspectives.
- Sources selected should offer firmly supported judgements or conclusions based on some combination of evidence, reason, argument, experience, authority or opinion.
- Evaluation of sources and perspectives should form a substantial element of candidate essays.

General comments

The work seen by Examiners in this series was of very variable quality, with a minority of candidates achieving at higher levels, whilst a significant number of candidates struggled to reach Level 3. There are indications that some centres have not fully embraced a skills-based approach; specialist subject knowledge is elevated at the expense of deconstruction and reconstruction. This is particularly true when essays submitted appear to have been written for an alternative syllabus. Support and training materials are available to assist with the development of this approach which, to some, may be quite new.

As with any academic essay, planning is key to success and only a minority of submissions displayed significant deficiencies in this respect. Most candidates utilised the permissible word length very well. Essays were, generally, well structured and followed accepted conventions making them easy to read and understand candidates' thinking and direction. Highly successful candidates displayed a particularly good level of planning when striking the necessary balance between the presentation of evidence, analysis, evaluation and synthesis in order to address all assessment criteria, with only a handful of over-length essays submitted. In the interests of fair and equal assessment for all candidates, Examiners will only assess essay content within 2000 words which can have a very negative impact when assessing a conclusion which is only considered in part or, in some cases, not at all. Essays substantially shorter than the advised minimum length of 1750 words were more common. The suggested lower limit is not counted in the same way but Examiners may find it difficult to award at higher levels. This particularly applies to criterion C, as a very good or excellent understanding of source material cannot be demonstrated, and to criterion E, where perspectives are neither detailed nor full.

An informed and thoughtful consideration and wording of the essay title or question is the starting point for a successful essay. The best titles are concise and leave little room for confusion as to the candidate's aims. For instance, "Should countries accept refugees?" or "Is urbanisation improving society?" offer questions which are clear and enable the candidates to develop globally contrasting perspectives. Conversely, many titles do not serve this purpose, as is the case with, "Is the 2017 police violence against black people a sign of USA racism?". Quite often, essay titles took the form, "To what extent does income play a role in obesity rates?". The tendency here is to provide an answer which is descriptive and framed in terms of degree rather than offering any contrast. In a quite different example, a candidate asks, "Is technology the main reason of health degradation?". It is difficult to see how this question could be reasonably answered within 2000 words given the potential breadth. Finally, "Is science our demise?" requires a considerable amount of work simply in order to establish what parameters of science are under consideration and a working concept of 'demise'. Precision will help to focus candidates' minds.

Only a minority of candidates appear to understand the centrality of globally contrasting perspectives when planning and writing their essays. Their starting point is to articulate precisely what these perspectives are and why they are global in character. Arguments and evidence are analysed and evaluated for one perspective and then for the other. Having clearly established the terms and content of the debate, they move on to synthesising the evidence for both perspectives lending them coherence and order, explaining

the particular strengths or weaknesses within each perspective before offering a comparative evaluation which will lead them to a supported conclusion. Essentially, candidates who follow this process are thinking in terms of perspectives throughout the essay. Without doubt, this process of reconstruction is not an easy one but necessary if candidates are to achieve at a higher level.

Many candidates encountered difficulties in developing globally contrasting perspectives, limiting the opportunity to achieve at higher levels whilst a significant number struggled to develop contrasting perspectives, limiting their achievement to lower levels. Some of the recurring issues which contributed to these difficulties follow:

- Confusion between the meaning of lenses and perspectives. Lenses (also referred to as *Themes* in the syllabus) refer to differing ways of viewing issues. To take the example of immigration, a candidate might choose to view this issue through economic, socio-cultural and political lenses. In providing examples of how immigration has a negative impact when viewed through these lenses, the candidate has not provided evidence of contrasting perspectives. Only if the candidate is able to offer evidence of examples when, for instance, immigration has a positive impact when viewed through the economic lens, whilst at a socio-cultural level, poor integration is problematic will they have succeeded in developing contrasting perspectives.
- A number of candidates researched factors negatively impacting the environment and quality of life. Rather than offering evidence of positive impacts (which may well be very difficult if not impossible to achieve), thereby developing contrasting perspectives, some candidates went on to offer suggestions as to how these problems might be alleviated or resolved. Whilst this approach does generate an alternative perspective, it must be understood that it is a complementary rather than contrasting perspective.
- Quite often, candidates will research a topic which is global in character such as gene editing of human embryos. Arguments are then presented both for and against the procedure which are not associated with specific regions or nation states, clearly differentiated as a consequence of levels of economic development or political systems or with differing cultural or religious traditions. This approach fails to engage with differentiated human experience and the perspectives developed, whilst contrasting, are not globally contrasting.
- In a similar way, candidates may research the issue of abortion and show some awareness of the requirement for a global dimension. The evidence, examples and arguments may be based on, for instance, the ongoing debate in the USA. A candidate then provides data giving figures for the numbers of abortions or legal constraints in different countries around the world. Unless these figures are accompanied by some discussion of support for and objections to abortion in those countries then the candidate has not developed a global dimension and has succeeded in developing contrasting perspectives only.

Whilst the vast majority of candidates rely on secondary research in the form of text, occasionally candidates include charts or diagrams or some element of primary research. This is perfectly acceptable and can, in some cases, enhance the overall quality of evidence presented. More often, the significance or value of these sources is not drawn out and does little to further the body of evidence presented.

Plagiarism is a growing problem with increasing reliance on internet-based research and pasting and copying from websites without citation. The use of 'spinner' software, designed to confuse plagiarism search tools, has also been noted. It is essential that candidates are conversant with citation and referencing conventions and utilise them appropriately.

Comments on specific criteria

Criterion 1 focuses on communication skills, essay structure and the quality of citations and referencing. Almost universally, candidates are well-versed in essay structure and, on the whole, Examiners find essays generally clear in their direction and easy to follow. Candidates commonly achieve at Level 3 with a substantial number achieving at Level 4 as their command of English is very good and just a small number who reach Level 5 by virtue of the quality of expression, use of a wide-ranging vocabulary and complex sentence structure. Many candidates could improve their level through quite simple measures including careful proof reading removing common and repetitive errors, the use of 'signposting' to guide the reader through the different stages of the essay and appropriate paragraphing. Communication should, at all times be purposeful and, on occasions, this could be improved. Impediments include over-elaborate definitions of key terms or lengthy introductions of authors and their achievements or standing. Whilst the quality of communication and essay structure is the main determinant of level, Examiners take careful note of the quality of citations and referencing which may impact this level positively or negatively. Citations should

clearly indicate the source used on that page without ambiguity and then appear in the bibliography. Many candidates use the briefest in-text citation which is inadequate and, quite often, not all citations appear in the bibliography or appear in a bibliography listing many sources which have not been used. An increasing number of centres are encouraging their candidates to use numbered citations which are translated into full, footnoted citations which is highly effective and has the added advantage that they do not contribute to the overall word count of the essay.

The next two criteria consider the sources used. Criterion 2 examines the quality of source selection. A significant minority of essays were reliant on fact-based sources, which were descriptive and devoid of argument. Several essays, including some which were particularly well formulated, were entirely reliant on Western sources, limiting them to Level 3 for this criterion. Additionally, by using limited sources it can then be difficult to develop perspectives with global content. In order to achieve at higher levels, candidates are required to access sources which demonstrate global contrast. The term global should be understood in a wider context than, simply, geographical region. Sources may originate from differing cultural, religious or political systems or traditions as well as from countries or regions with differing levels of economic or industrial development. When deciding on an essay title and the research they intend to pursue, candidates need to be aware of the range of sources they can access. An essay entitled, "Does HIV disproportionately affect women?", was based on sources from the US, UK, Kenya, South Africa, the World Health Organisation and United Nations. Global contrast was demonstrated as a consequence of utilising globally contrasting sources and achieved at the highest level. Similar contrast might have been demonstrated using Western sources only but, without the benefit of globally contrasting sources, at a cost of a lower level of achievement.

Criterion 3 concerns the treatment of sources in terms of analysis and evaluation and should be considered as containing two distinct elements, both of which require fulfilment for high achievement. A key issue here (and linking to the previous criterion) is one of quantity or quality. In order to achieve well for criterion 2, sources should be detailed or full and detailed. In order to achieve well for criterion 3, analysis should show a very good or full understanding and critical evaluation should be undertaken across a range of criteria. It is difficult to see how any of the above can be achieved with a large number of sources. The strongest essays tend to be limited to a relatively small number of principal sources with, perhaps, other sources used to provide background data or facts. Successful candidates used relatively brief, yet telling, quotations from sources followed by critical analysis and few candidates achieved less than Level 3. Occasionally, candidates incorporate lengthy quotations from sources, which is not helpful as this limits the candidates' own work within the permissible word length. Brief quotations are quite adequate in conveying a central argument from a source. The outcomes for evaluation were very mixed: a majority of candidates did not undertake any meaningful evaluation but merely commented on the author's credentials, without considering the content of the source. The following paragraph from an essay entitled, "Do zoos offer a conservational and educational benefit?", illustrates the candidate's ability to seamlessly draw together brief quotation, analysis and evaluation.

In the next paragraph, Dr. Hone provides a counter argument. Providing balance to his article makes his points more valid, when he's willing to admit there might be other, better ways. He states, "I am perfectly willing to recognise that there are bad zoos and bad exhibits." He acknowledges that not all zoos are doing magnificent work for the animals' benefit. He then compares good zoos versus bad zoos to corrupt police versus good police, saying that even though there are a few corrupt police officers the vast majority of police officers are not. This comparison strengthens Dr. Hone's argument because of the emotional and logical appeal'.

The next three criteria assess the perspectives. Criterion 4 examines a candidate's capacity to present perspectives in a balanced way, as well as displaying empathy for alternative perspectives by way of acceptance or understanding of an opposing view and especially one they do not agree with. This does not necessarily need to be overtly stated as an essay which gives equal room and treatment to contrasting perspectives is indicative of a measure of empathy. However, this balance, coupled with a clear appreciation of opposing views, will raise the level of achievement. One candidate researching into literary censorship wrote, "While it is not difficult to empathise with the idea that certain themes can offend the audience, that parental concerns about the education their child receives are valid and that the steps they may take to control any exposure they deem harmful for their child are justifiable, it may well be unacceptable, both ethically and legally, to take measures which will restrict others from receiving the exposure someone personally considers harmful".

Criterion 5 is a straightforward assessment of the quality of the perspectives developed and is largely determined by the arguments derived from source material. The majority of candidates had little difficulty in developing contrasting perspectives and many developed global dimensions and global contrast. A smaller

number offered little or no contrast as a consequence of generating a single or vague perspective. It is essential that candidates have undertaken sufficient research and reading in order to clarify, in their own minds, what perspectives are relevant to the topic they are researching, the degree of contrast they generate and the extent to which they can be globally differentiated. With this in mind, they must be prepared to modify their approach or, quite possibly, consider a different area of research. Only when perspectives are globally contrasting can candidates access Levels 4 and 5. In order to achieve at higher levels, Examiners are taking several factors into consideration. One would expect to find several viewpoints contributing to the development of a perspective. Furthermore, they are substantial in that both facts and reasoned arguments are conveyed. Finally, the perspectives are illustrated with globally differentiated examples. Taken together, perspectives benefit from both breadth and depth and may be considered full and detailed. A particularly good example is found in the essay, "To what extent is foreign aid beneficial or detrimental for the long-term development of nations?". Arguments presented included contributing to economic growth, eradicating disease, improving nutrition, improving democracy and human rights, counteracting instability and terrorism, increasing corruption and dependency, financing the state thereby reducing the need for efficient taxation and lenders pursuing geopolitical aims. Haiti, Indonesia and Rwanda were used as examples of recipients whilst the US, UK, China and Japan as examples of lenders. Perspectives were both full and detailed.

Criterion 6 concerns the treatment of perspectives in terms of analysis and evaluation. This is a key area for development across the vast majority of centres, as candidates rarely synthesise the arguments derived from sources into clearly delineated, coherent perspectives, which are then open to both analysis and evaluation. Having said that, many more candidates are outlining perspectives in their introductions as well as offering some explanation of their contrasting nature and global character, possibly supported by some key data. Not only is this beneficial to the candidate in providing focus but also to the Examiner who, from an early stage, has a clear idea of the candidate's intent. Stronger candidates are able to analyse and evaluate the relative strengths of arguments in terms of their contribution to perspectives as well as evaluate the relative strengths of perspectives. Not only do perspectives become coherent as a consequence of this work, but so does the conclusion which, to a large extent, is justified as a result. Candidates benefit from examining and explaining contributing arguments but it is essential that they understand they are the building blocks used to construct and develop perspectives, the central aim of this component.

Criterion 7 assesses the quality of the conclusion and the level descriptors indicate that Examiners are looking for several contributing factors. The starting point is a supported and balanced conclusion, which should emerge from a consideration of the relative merits of developed perspectives. Candidates are also assessed on their capacity for reflection and it is important to note that Examiners are not looking for reflection on the work processes or research undertaken. Whilst it is important that candidates should develop their learning skills, reflection on this should not form any part of the conclusion. Candidates should reflect on their findings; what are the implications and consequences for their personal standpoint, other people, communities or nation states? In an essay entitled, "Can euthanasia be justified?", the candidate concludes that it can be. They then go on to say that, "I also have reservations, as some failed legislation examples have proven, that in order for euthanasia to be considered a safe and feasible option, laws must be well designed with strict and continuous enforcement. This is required to avoid abuse by doctors, conflict of interest and to protect vulnerable sections of society being coerced.". Finally, a further element of reflection is required whereby the candidate makes suggestions for further research, which was commonly overlooked altogether and reduced candidates' marks. Successful candidates accept that their research is limited or incomplete and go on to consider how they may further their own understanding, as well as indicate what research would address this. Returning to the essay, "Does HIV disproportionately affect women?", the candidate states that, "However, if I was to further my research, I would investigate as to why women suffer an unequal access to education compared to men. This would then illustrate the link between the lack of education and HIV in Kenya".

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

Paper 9239/03
Paper 3

Key messages

Presentations which rapidly and clearly defined their issue and perspective were more likely to be successful.

It is important to utilise the permitted running time for the presentation fully, which allows for a developed and reflective argument.

Conclusions should ideally be detailed and justify the effectiveness of solutions which are proposed.

Reflective papers need to be critically evaluative rather than narrative.

General comments

Individual Presentation

Definition of the Issue

Many presentations made a successful start by providing a clear definition of the chosen issue during the opening moments. This enabled the audience to be clear about the focus of their topic and prepare for the elaboration of the issue that followed. The tone of the opening moments of presentations sets the mood for what is to follow; in most instances, effective presenters were able to make a clear start and signpost their planned route for the following eight minutes. In most cases, candidates had spent a lot of time researching their presentation and providing ample and relevant support for the points that were raised. Where research was detailed (Level 4) this was because of the quantity and specificity of material assembled, but it was only varied (Level 5) where that information had been gathered from a range of types and contexts of evidence (quantitative, qualitative, national, global, etc.).

In the following presentation, on ethical approaches to gender based violence, the issue was well defined not only because a definition was given at the outset, but also because it was then exemplified and explained in a number of further, specific contexts:

Gender based violence is basically a term that is given to an individual that or a group of individuals that were victimized from assault based on their gender essentially, and this can also be a term that is applied to, when there is unequal power relationships between two genders in the context of the society that it is found in.

Who is affected by gender based violence? Well essentially, victims of gender based violence are mainly women and girls, who are assaulted by men in their community or men in their family, such as, fathers, brothers and uncles. This is a problem because it creates a circumstance where women are being afraid to talk out because, not only are the men in the communities the problem but also instances where the people in their family are also the problem, so it becomes an issue in terms of talking about it.

Differentiation of Perspectives

There was a clear division between presentations which responded to the need to differentiate perspectives and those which did not. In the first case, the candidate started their own approach early on in the presentation and listed those taken by other team members in contrast to this, sometimes explaining the difference between them and justifying their own. In the second, other perspectives were not mentioned, and

the candidate's own approach was sometimes unclear. Sometime the names and roles of team members did emerge in the reflective papers but it was not possible to give them credit there.

The following is an example of where work can be quickly and clearly differentiated from other team perspectives at the start of the presentation:

I will be talking to you about how the crowding of people into illegally occupied land in the cities, later converted into shanty towns, could be significantly reduced through the solution of developing rural areas, while my teammate will address and discuss a sustainable development project as a solution to the issue.

The issue and solution of the candidate is clearly put, and the existence of another approach is also identified from the other team member.

Structure of Argument

The most successful presentations had a clear and logical structure to their argument. At lower levels, presentations relied more on description with less development and evaluation of ideas. A small number of candidates, on the other hand, used their arguments to explore the boundaries of the knowledge that they had acquired and considered the limitations that it might create for their proposed solution. Some arguments however were less balanced, and it was less clear from these presentations whether the topic had been explored from differing viewpoints. Most presentations consisted of a single view which, though effective and thoroughly explored, omitted other possibilities.

Some presentations were under three minutes and tended to go straight from defining the issue to stating the solution without developing anything further of their argument. Presentations which occupied close to the full length of the permitted running time of eight minutes were able to explore the issue in more detail and develop reasons justifying their solution.

Conclusion

The most effective conclusions were given enough time for an explanation and justification of the solution, and linked this to the evidence and argument which had been presented earlier in the presentation. In order for a solution to be seen as effective, the candidate has to be able to explain why it is so and justify the conclusion. The first half of this conclusion, developing solutions to water pollution in Panama, demonstrates some of these characteristics:

Finally, there are still steps Panama needs to take, such as adopting more advanced water treatment technologies just like the Canadian aerobic system, which is cheaper and more efficient. Because Panama pollution was reduced at an extremely high cost of investment so, to be able to afford the long run and future projects, Panama should take into consideration the need of saving cost and purifying the water at the same time. Furthermore, the country should actively promote the idea of "clean production", in order to encourage the public to participate deeply in the environmental protection.

A multi-step solution is articulated, with reasons explaining and justifying each step proposed.

Presentational Skills

Candidates were able to achieve up to Level 3 on this criterion by showing some engagement with their audience, usually through eye contact, and some use of appropriate verbal intonation. Visual aids, usually PowerPoint slides, were also used appropriately. However, candidates achieving Levels 4 and 5 tended to use slides constructively by explaining their visual contents and making specific links to points in their argument or evidence.

Reflective Paper

Reflective papers which were descriptions of what had been done rather than the quality of the experience tended to achieve at Levels 1 and 2. Some candidates, however, used their reflective paper to be frank, honest, and reflective in a mature and objective way whilst also being complimentary and encouraging towards their team. Candidates also showed the level of engagement they had experienced through exploring their chosen subject and working with others in such a close way.

It was important for reflective papers to evaluate team work: to discuss and judge the strengths and weaknesses of their team work, rather than just a narrative account of what happened. Those who also reflected evaluatively on their learning, measuring the impact of what they had discovered on their views, were able to achieve well across the reflective paper.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

<p>Paper 9239/04 Research Report</p>

Key Messages

- Supported evaluation should be at the heart of the reports.
- It is important that the chosen title is one which leads to discussion and that its precise demands are met.
- The reflection element must not be neglected or trivialised.

General Comments

There were strong and effective answers, which showed a clear understanding of the critical process, which is at the heart of the requirement for the Cambridge Report. The questions chosen led to a debate. There were differing perspectives established. The evidence that supported them was appropriate and well linked to the issue. There was a critical sense shown and the evaluation was appropriate and sometimes very effective. Conclusions followed from the critical analysis, and the reflection related to the conclusion and referred to methodology.

The least successful were essays or projects which aimed primarily to convey information rather than to sustain a discussion. Though the knowledge was often relevant to the topic, it did not support different perspectives on an issue. Where evidence was deployed it was predominantly to provide factual content. These answers did not seem to see that the Cambridge Research Report should be a progression from the skills based learning undertaken in the first three units of GP. Within the context of the chosen topic, reports are being assessed on the way that critical skills are shown. What is vital is that there should be different perspectives on the issue. These perspectives should be supported by a range of evidence which is appropriately referenced. The evaluation of the evidence should lead logically to a conclusion on the issue. That conclusion should be the subject of reflection. There is a package of skills – relevant research, analysis of research materials, evaluation of arguments and evidence within the perspectives and reaching a judgement which is then considered critically. It is this package that is being assessed not the knowledge as such.

Where this process was better understood, there were more successful answers. However, there were still reports which had limited assessment of different views or which did not address the issue in the question directly. Such reports were able to gain credit for some relevant research and for developing a question but needed to develop the evaluation of perspectives and evidence much more. There was also a tendency to neglect the final stage in reflecting on conclusions reached, even though that is a key element in the Critical Path. The comments on individual aspects are intended to act as a guide for centres. They may merely confirm the good practice shown by some centres.

A key element is the evaluation of the perspectives and the evidence which supports them. Without specific judgements being made and supported, high marks should not be given for this part of AO1. There was some tendency for marking to reward explanation rather than specific judgements. Where there is no attempt to assess either evidence or arguments and reports simply describe views or use evidence at face value, then the key skill of evaluation is not being demonstrated. When there is an attempt to evaluate – that is to put a value on views or evidence – then the degree of support and the depth of judgement should be considered. Excessive reliance on looking at the authorship or origin of sources should not be over-credited. Sometimes high marks were given simply for candidates describing who wrote the source and where it had been published. This could be the basis for judgement but it is important that assumptions are not made which result in over generalised assessment. It is not enough to note that authors have academic standing or their work is published in learned journals or websites. Such experts may hold very different views on issues and their evidence can only be assessed by going beyond consideration of the origins of the source to looking at the arguments, the methodology and trying to corroborate their findings with other evidence. A

wide range of critical criteria should be employed than merely commenting on the origin of the evidence. Sometimes this can lead to very simplistic comments. “X is an expert and has written on a lot of websites” would be an example of quite limited evaluation. Where there were more developed comments about the purpose of sources or assumptions they might have or how they linked to other evidence or the strength of their arguments or the depth or width of the evidence their findings were based on, then evaluation became more convincing.

Evaluation of perspectives is a key element in reaching a judgement. However, the judgement should relate to the specific issue in the question. The advice both from teachers in centres and from Cambridge International consultants is important. It was evident in some cases that questions had either not been submitted or the advice had not been taken. Titles must be actual questions and not statements. They must also be clear and lead directly towards sustained discussion of different perspectives. Topics which were parochial and only related to the candidates’ own school or offered only limited opportunity for discussion and research were sometimes self-defeating. However, there were many valid and stimulating questions which were not properly developed in reports and which offered a limited consideration of different viewpoints and instead presented a single view. By their nature, such arguments lack conviction as there is no real consideration of alternatives, even if those alternatives are ultimately rejected. Sometimes the evidence for the counterview was very thin because it was difficult to find views and arguments which supported it. In other cases, the lack of interim judgements made it hard for a convincing final conclusion to be reached and there was a mismatch between the arguments and evidence presented and the final judgements. The best responses dealt very directly with an issue which was susceptible to sustained discussion. They offered a balanced analysis of different views and came to clear judgements which were consistent with the final conclusion,

The final stage in the process is to reflect on the conclusion to see if the methods employed and the range of evidence considered were adequate and how robust the final judgement was. This is a key life skill and very important in the world of business and politics. Once a judgement has been reached, wise decision makers reflect on whether their processes in reaching that decision had been adequate; whether further evidence might modify the decision; what the implications of the decision are. Sometimes the view is taken that even with the flaws, the judgement should hold. Sometimes the judgement is sustained. Sometimes there is a need to rethink a part or even the whole of the judgement. The reflection might include considering how the evidence had modified or confirmed initial thoughts but its main thrust should be on standing back and looking at the methodology and evidence used. Where this was done appropriately, there were some thoughtful and well-considered appraisals. Sometimes, the results did not focus enough on the actual judgements and were too focused on personal experience. Sometimes, there was little evidence of reflection at all. It is important that marking should take into account the depth of the reflection.

In general, the trend in previous years for centres to reward AO1 appropriately continued, but it is important that the criteria for assessing the candidate logs be considered more carefully in some cases. Logs are not the same as lists of sources and they should chart the progression of the research and the thinking about the issue. The marking of AO1 analysis of evidence was more accurate than the marking of evaluation but where evidence is thin or irrelevant then marginal comments should point that out. This will help the initial marking to form a judgement.

Reference has already been made to the wide variation in approach and standard. The comments on individual key aspects are intended to offer guidance and should not be misconstrued as a negative view. Even when the criteria for high-level thinking were only intermittently met, reports often displayed valuable research skills and an enthusiasm for investigating a topic which was often close to candidates’ hearts. The experience of research was of enormous value and there was a considerable amount of assessment of arguments offered which is of ever-increasing importance in a world of fake news, misinformation and half truths. So once again, our thanks to candidates for offering some highly interesting material and to centres for supporting a qualification which is so important for twenty-first century life.