

Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE A2 H452

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H052

OCR Report to Centres

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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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Overview

There was strong performance at grade A across the qualification, with specialist terminology being used accurately and effectively. At E, candidates were gaining partial performance marks across the breadth of the papers, suggesting that they had acquired a good range of reasoning skills. Unattempted questions were rare and most answers were focused in the right direction, even when weak. Overall, questions involving analysis were answered more strongly than those focusing upon evaluation and it was the longer questions requiring reasoned cases that spread the performance, allowing stronger candidates the freedom to synthesize astute observations into powerful arguments.

Some candidates were very close to gaining full marks, but did not access these, either because they did not develop their answers sufficiently, or did not develop them in ways that were creditable. Checking with the most recent mark schemes might help candidates to realise what little is required to gain more marks. Centres may also find useful the OCR free on-line Critical Thinking textbook which can be accessed via the examinations officer on the interchange. The textbook materials can be downloaded onto an intranet and manipulated towards class needs. Past practice questions have been selected to illustrate how to develop answers and exam tips could be usefully collated into revision booklets.

Plans were in evidence and used to good effect. Where candidates knew the conclusion they were intending to reach from the outset, they tended to plan their reasoning to support it, thereby achieving consistency and stronger arguments. There were a few instances where candidates focused on the wrong document or paragraph, or the wrong source's claim. This can be very costly in marks. Candidates are urged to read the questions carefully and highlight key requirements to focus their answers correctly.

More specifically and in a nutshell: In F501 candidates performed evenly across Sections A and B. In F502 candidates developed their own arguments more successfully than they evaluated reasoning. In F503 candidates evidenced stronger performance when applying principles than they did in evaluating choices. In F504 candidates analysed reasoning more successfully enabling a more even performance.

F501 Introduction to Critical Thinking

General comments

There was a wide mark range this session, with stunning performance at 60+ marks and even marks into the 70s. Candidates at this level were writing mature developed answers more than worthy of a grade A. The cohort as a whole performed evenly across Sections A and B with 'No Responses' being a very uncommon occurrence. Questions 1 and 10 evidenced the greatest range in performance. Question 4 was found to be the most challenging and Question 5 the most accessible.

Most employed specialist terms throughout with good effect. This session however saw otherwise strong answers not always using credibility criteria in Section B. '*Reliability*' and '*context*' crept in, with evaluation of data which could not be credited in these questions. Vested interest sometimes missed the mark, as it was used as being synonymous with having an interest in an area, rather than having a motive to represent things accurately or to misrepresent them.

On the whole candidates paid close attention to what was being asked. Where this lapsed, for example in Question 6 looking at the wrong part of the document or in Question 9 looking at claims preceding those of the sources to be assessed, it was costly in marks.

The strongest developed their answers carefully and deliberately, thereby potentially accessing all of the marks available. Many candidates accessed the basic marks and with only a little development could have gained more. Looking at the mark schemes to appreciate what little more is necessary for full marks, might be a useful exercise for such middle range candidates.

Timing did not seem to be a problem and the majority completed their answers in the space available. Those who continued onto extra paper did not always indicate that they did so where they left off in the original space and the question number was not always given on the continuation sheets. These continuations need to be clearly labelled, if the additions are to make sense. Several candidates did not make use of the continuation sheets for additional answers, but used an extra booklet instead, which carries the risk of being missed.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

- 1 Candidates responded well to the rigorous demands for precision in this set of questions; the strongest by identifying the correct text without omission or addition and the majority by focusing upon the correct part of the text. A minority were within striking distance, with some idea of what they were looking for.
- 1 (a) Those who identified the correct part of the text occasionally omitted '*that*' or added the preceding counter assertion '*whilst the resulting....*'. A number of candidates were attracted by the first sentence, '*MPs have claimed that...*'.
- 1 (b) Candidates were able to correctly identify at least one of the reasons, even when they had identified an incorrect conclusion. The strongest answers stated '*Gaining an extra....*' without omissions. A minority correctly stated '*It could result in fewer accidents*' without '*including fewer deaths...*'. Where candidates went to other parts of the text, '*We could have longer, lighter evenings....*' was the most frequent incorrect answer.

- 1 (c) The majority identified this correctly, avoiding omitting *'long'* in front of *'lazy'* or *'all year round'* at the end. A minority omitted the first half of the reasoning, beginning their answer *'If Britain...'*. A number thought that hypothetical reasoning involved possibility and erroneously identified, *'We would have longer lighter evenings which could extend...'*.
- 1 (d) A minority gave three correct answers, and most were able to identify *'whilst'*. Some gave argument indicator words that did not figure in the text such as *'therefore'* and *'because'*, whilst others focused upon *'claimed'* and *'pointed out'*. If centres are looking for areas to improve performance across the range, identifying argument element indicator words might be one to focus upon, as candidates as a whole found this skill difficult.
- 2 (a) A large number correctly identified this as being a *'counter'* and about half went on to clinch the second mark by adding *'assertion'*, many thinking it was a counter argument. Only a very few incorrectly identified it as *'an assumption'* or *'hypothetical reasoning'*. Instances of non-argument elements were very rare.
- 2 (b) Focused answers, often accurate textbook style definitions, gave both the characteristics of *'opposing'* and being a *'statement/claim'* rather than an argument.
- 3 In this question candidates needed to reflect carefully about the context of daylight saving. The most astute answers came not only from the strongest candidates; those who scored less well in other areas of the paper were able to pick up full marks here through carefully developed answers.
- 3 (a) The strongest answers explained the impact that daylight saving would have upon different types of farming. Those who gained partial performance marks stopped short at simply stating that livestock farmers would have different views from those of arable farmers. The weakest answers imagined that daylight saving would bring more sunlight, which would help the crops to grow better, gaining no marks. Candidates need to be discouraged from offering generic answers of the type, *'This is only one person/farmer'*, which cannot be credited.
- 3 (b)
- (i) The strongest answers captured the impact of the difference between a state and a country upon the raw figures. The majority stated that the two *countries* were different, without explaining how this impacted upon their electricity usage.
- To gain the second mark in such questions as those above, candidates need be able to reflect upon difference to draw out how this might impact upon views or habits making one set unrepresentative of another.
- 3 (b)
- (ii) Answers ranged from the plausible of colder winters, greater use of technology, global warming and the recession, to the more implausible of *'a very long solar flare'*. In this question, candidates found it easier to relate their answer to a change in cost or usage, thus accessing the second mark. A minority gained nought as they appeared to miss the directive in the question, ***'other than the effect of daylight saving.'***
- 4 Candidates found it easier to express the assumptions to do with CO₂ and green forms of energy, than to express those to do with need and usage. The strongest expressed this simply as *'people only use heating and lighting when they need to'*. Weaker answers went to the extremes of stating that people would only use heating and lighting in the evening, which if they had reflected carefully, would be implausible for the author to assume. An unusually high number of answers re-stated something already given in the text, thus gaining nought.

- 5 Most candidates did not move beyond the context of the documents, using trade, economics or tourism as the basis for their reason, although a few moved on to defence or being a partner in the European Union. Both approaches were acceptable. The strongest answers either related directly to Europe, or maintained the link with the claim with an 'it' or a 'they'. Fewer answers added explanations or examples this session, although the weakest continued to provide a full argument rather than a reason.
- 6 Answers covering the whole spectrum were given. Those who took the logical approach of giving the reason followed by the conclusion, then examining the reason and looking at why it did not link to the conclusion usually scored more highly. Many challenged the reasoning rather than evaluating the link, with a few of these omitting any mention of the conclusion. A minority of answers looked at the wrong document.

Section B

- 7 The majority chose relevant credibility criteria with which to assess the document. Most picked up on the fact that the unit was funded by the GLA; the strongest developing this into a vested interest to represent the facts accurately to maintain the funding; the weakest supposing ulterior motives or that they therefore had a good reputation. A number of candidates did not use credibility criteria, focusing upon the reliability of the information provided, preventing access to any marks. The strongest were able to give a textual reference to support their assessments.
- 8 Most accurately identified the claims. Boris Johnson's claim seemed to be the most common mistake, but this was quite rare. Many identified the source by the Document or omitted this, thus gaining access only to partial performance marks.
- 9 Claims were generally correct. For the spokeswoman, a minority quoted the preceding conclusion, '*So, overall there was a fall in road deaths and injuries.*' Their assessments could only access the capped 1 mark; likewise, claims referring to the material preceding the professor's actual claims.

Many more candidates realised that the assessment should be made of the claim rather than the source in general. Some did this with a passing reference to a key related word, whilst others more formulaically tagged part of the claim to the end of their assessment. Some assessed claims that had not been selected, thus gaining partial performance marks. The weakest answers assessed expertise or reputation in very general terms without reference to any claim made.

The majority chose the credibility criteria wisely, leading to strong, astute assessments. 'Rogue' criteria such as '*representativity*', '*reliability*', '*context*' and '*circumstantial*' were still evident but rare; as was writing about evidential support or statistical evidence. These approaches could gain no marks. In some cases vested interest led to rather odd assessments for the spokeswoman, with claims that she would have a vested interest to lie to support the trials/studies because she would want to save lives. Similarly, claims of lack of expertise for the professor occasionally became extreme, when claiming that he would not know how to read meters.

Most indicated whether their assessment weakened or strengthened the credibility of the claim, thus gaining a very accessible mark. The weakest assessed in one direction and concluded in the opposite direction.

- 10 Candidates found the topic accessible, and interacted vigorously and empathically with the question with varying degrees of skill. Most focused their answer coming to a judgement about effects, usually deciding for the positive, with only a few trying to decide whether or not the change was likely to happen, delving into realms of public opinion.

A logical, systematic approach worked best, dealing with credibility and plausibility separately. The majority of candidates were on task throughout, it being rare that candidates confused the two skills, or dealt with one to the exclusion of the other. However those who chose to discuss the credibility of every source did not always leave themselves enough time to explore fully the plausibility.

On the whole, credibility was dealt with more competently than plausibility. Most dealt with a side at a time assessing the credibility of more than one source on that side. Those who assessed three sources on a side, gave themselves spare capacity to misjudge one of them and still access full marks in that area. Interestingly the 'Boris effect' was evidenced in the answers, with most seeing the mayor's credibility as high with a reputation to maintain at the same time as ascribing vested interest to distort the facts to the MP. Some candidates discussed credibility too generally by assessing a side collectively, rather than naming and assessing individual sources. Others asserted expertise or ability to see without explaining why this was so, as in '*The professor has expertise*', instead of '*The professor from the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University has expertise in the biological and psychological implications of adjusting the times of daylight*'. The latter takes longer to write, but explains clearly why the academic is credible and can potentially be credited higher marks. It was rare to find assessments that did not mention the credibility criteria, although as in Question 9, reliability of the information did figure at times and could gain no credit.

Plausibility tended to either be fully explored with astute observations about how daylight would impact upon people's lives, or it did not move beyond what was in the text, with long sections of this being quoted with an addition, '*I think this is plausible*'. This is a basic answer, but a small amount of development based upon individual idea is sufficient to raise it to a higher level eg '*It is plausible that darker mornings cause more road deaths*' is basic, whereas '*It is plausible that darker mornings cause more road deaths, because children crossing the road to go to school will be less visible*' raises the quality of the answer, providing the opportunity for higher marks to be awarded. Candidates need to be encouraged to think for themselves in this part of the question.

As a whole, candidates were evidencing a wide skill set. The strongest reached assessments that were both sensitive to context and mature in the balanced and nuanced judgements that they made. This cohort gained marks in every area, exhibiting varying levels of competence.

F502 Assessing and Developing Argument

General Comments

In Section A, candidates appeared to find the multiple choice questions more straightforward than in previous series, although they continue to find questions relating to the naming of argument elements challenging.

The topic of the resource booklet appeared to interest candidates and they were able to engage with it well. The paper discriminated well between candidates.

Candidates continue to find the evaluation questions on Section B challenging, whether it is of analogies, evidence or examples. Some candidates describe what the author is doing or the role of the argument element, rather than giving a justification of what the strength or weakness is in its use in the argument and how that impacts on the reasoning in context and with relevance to the question posed.

There were some excellent responses in Section C and it was clear that candidates had taken time to read and understand the questions and formulate their answers as required by the command words, as well as the specific terms required by the conclusions given.

Many responses were more concisely written and well planned than in the past with fewer candidates requiring additional pages. Although some candidates continued their answers on the additional pages, in most of cases this extra writing did not lead to more marks, the answer spaces being sufficient to gain full credit.

Excellent answers showed evidence of candidates planning their responses, to ensure that repetition was avoided and different strands of reasoning were provided. Candidates who took time to plan their further arguments, using the additional pages for that purpose, did in general produce higher quality arguments. It is recommended that centres encourage candidates to plan their further arguments, considering what their argument elements are and what their structure will be, before writing their arguments in full in the answer spaces provided.

There was little evidence of candidates running out of time. There were very few instances of questions not being answered and the further arguments often had accompanying plans on the additional pages, showing that candidates had time to consider their reasoning on these.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

The mark scheme contains a rationale on the correct and incorrect options for each question, and this should help to make this paper a good teaching aid for future examination sessions. This rationale is not reproduced in the comments below.

- 1 A significant number of candidates chose option A (counter-assertion) rather than option D (explanation). It is recommended that centres encourage candidates to analyse the arguments given thoroughly to determine the argument elements used, rather than just identifying argument indicator words and basing their analysis of argument solely on the use of these words. 'Some people' in the argument about school uniforms was not indicating any form of counter.

- 3 The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly. This shows an improvement in candidates' ability to consider the impact of an additional claim on the reasoning. This was also the case for question 10.
- 5 A number of candidates went for each of the incorrect options, particularly options A and D. Options A, B and D do not need to be assumed for the conclusion to follow, whereas option C does.
- 6 As is often the case in questions where candidates need to identify a flaw, there was a spread of marks amongst each of the options given, particularly option D. There was also a clear spread of marks across options B and C in question 9. Looking carefully at the mark scheme rationale for flaws questions on past papers will be instructive for candidates and centres.
- 7 This was one of the more challenging questions on this section, with many candidates incorrectly choosing options A or B.
- 8 The most popular incorrect choice was option D. Although *because* is an argument indicator word for reasons, that is not enough for something to be a reason. The statement is explaining why *something is the case* not why *something should be the case*.
- 11 There was a spread of marks across option A, B and D. Candidates should be advised to use the 'therefore' test in determining which selected option is the main conclusion for the argument.

Section B

- 16 Across the five parts of question 16, the full range of marks was shown and so this analysis question discriminated well between candidates. Many candidates correctly selected the correct argument elements of text from the passage and stated them verbatim, rather than paraphrasing them.
- 16 (a) Most candidates were able to access this question and achieve the full 2 marks which were available. A common error was to choose "The monarchy is the best form of government" which is the reason from paragraph 5 of the resource booklet.
- 16 (b) Of the 2 possible principles candidates could choose, most chose 'We should be prepared to pay a small price for anything that benefits the country' which appeared earlier in the resource booklet than the second. Quite a significant proportion chose "Unity is a good thing" though as it has no guide or impetus to action, it cannot be said to be a principle.
- 16 (c) This question discriminated well. Many candidates were able to identify correctly the
 - (cii) counter-argument and distinguish this into its reason and conclusion. The most common non-scoring answer was "continuity is not necessarily a good thing because change brings progress". Candidates should be advised that the argument indicator word 'however' may preface a counter or its response.
- 16 (d) Candidates who selected the incorrect argument element as the main conclusion in 16(a) often then went on to lose marks for 16(d). It is advised that centres help candidates to practise swapping the order around for intermediate and main conclusions, to help decide which supports, and which is supported. It was rare for candidates to identify an intermediate conclusion outside of the paragraphs to which they were directed, which is an improvement on June 2012.

Questions 17, 18 and 19

Most candidates were able to identify a strength or weakness in the use of the analogy, evidence and example. Others needed to develop their explanation of why and how this impacted on the argument.

- 17 Most candidates were able to identify a weakness in the use of the analogy. Others needed to develop their explanation of why and how this impacted on the argument.
- 18 Candidates should be advised that the specification states that they will not be expected to assess the accuracy or validity of the evidence given. Additionally, the evaluation **of** evidence (the size of any survey sample quoted; the representative nature of any sample quoted; how and when the evidence was collected; the potential ambiguity of findings; alternative interpretations of statistics) is part of the specification for F501 (3.1.1.9) and the evaluation of the **use** of evidence is part of the specification for F502 (3.2.2).
- 19 Excellent responses demonstrated a clear consideration of **how** the example was used to support the reasoning and make cogent responses about whether or not people outside Buckingham Palace were actually demonstrating that the monarchy generates income for the country by attracting tourists to the UK. Other responses needed to develop their explanations beyond countering the reasoning or disputing the presumption that the resource booklet mentioned.

Questions 20 and 22

There was a noticeable improvement on these questions compared to previous sessions, when candidates often gave flaws for appeals and vice versa. The vast majority of candidates were able to name and explain a flaw for question 20 and an appeal for question 22.

- 20 There was confusion between ad hominem and straw man flaws. Some candidates named one and explained the other.
- 21 This was answered better than in previous sessions. Candidates should be informed that where 2 (or more) assumptions are given, it is important to assure that each is really assumed and necessary for the argument.
- 22 There was confusion between an appeal to history and an appeal to tradition. Some candidates named one and explained the other.

Section C

23 and 25

Many excellent responses gave intermediate conclusions in question 23 to develop and structure their reasoning. Likewise, many excellent responses gave counter-arguments/assertions and responses in question 25 to show a balanced response. This was one way in which candidates have chosen to respond to the guidance “marks will be given for a well-structured and developed argument.”

Good responses which chose to provide evidence and/or examples used these to illustrate and support the reasoning, rather than taking the place of reasons or introducing significant weaknesses into their arguments.

- 23** Most candidates were able to provide an argument which focused on historic buildings. Less relevant responses focused on historical buildings, which is a very different concept.

Excellent responses provided relevant and valid counter arguments, which had an effective response, which acted as a reason for the main conclusion itself, but did not rely on this to be one of the two reasons required. Some responses needed to be developed beyond simplistic counter-assertions, such as “Some say we should not preserve our historic buildings, but they are wrong” as these showed no more than a superficial understanding of any opponent’s view.

- 24 (a)** Good responses were relevant and supportive. Candidates should be advised that precision is necessary for this question and the inclusion of other arguments need to be avoided.

- 24 (b)** Candidates should be advised to ensure that their response should provide significant challenge for the claim, ensuring that the consequence of the hypothetical reason has a clear connection to the antecedent.

- 25** Excellent responses provided intermediate conclusions which were supported (by reason/reasons, rather than just evidence/examples) and supportive (of the main conclusion). Some needed to develop their responses so that their intermediate conclusions went beyond being mere development of reasoning, or summary statements, which cannot be strictly said to be intermediate conclusions.

F503 Ethical Reasoning & Decision-making

General Comments

After the assessment materials had gone to press, Channel 4 announced that the 2013 series of Time Team programmes would be the last. Very few candidates, if any, were aware of this, and it did not seem to affect their answers.

As on previous occasions, many candidates appeared to have begun writing without having taken time to read the documents carefully and to think about the questions. Candidates should ensure that they reserve time to plan their responses effectively.

Comments on individual questions

- 1 At first sight, question 1 may have resembled an AS question, but it was assessed more rigorously, especially in relation to the persuasiveness of the judgments. It produced a range of answers and marks. Nearly all candidates rightly identified expertise as a key criterion, and many correctly judged that Tony Robinson was not an expert, but had developed some expertise and/or had access to expert advisers. A few candidates claimed that the experts mentioned by Tony Robinson were unreliable, either because he did not name them or because he did not state in what subject their expertise lay, but most realized that they were expert archaeologists.

A popular wrong answer was that Tony Robinson had a vested interest to oppose nighthawkers because if “there are likely to be no metal finds at all in the top layer of Britain’s soil within 20 years,” he would lose his job in Time Team. This unpersuasive evaluation was not credited, partly because it is highly unlikely that Time Team would have run out of archaeology to investigate if it had continued after 2013 and partly because it is circular (Robinson has a vested interest in favour of the claim only if it is true).

- 2 In responding to question 2, a fair number of candidates recognized that the usefulness of the Heritage Erosion Counter was reduced by the fact that its figures were “estimates”. Fewer of them supported this judgment by reference to the key point that because most of the finds are unrecorded, their number must be a guess. A few misunderstood the document on this point, and claimed incorrectly that the statistics on the Artefact Erosion Counter referred only to finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. A lot of candidates interpreted the claim by the Heritage Action Website that they had underestimated the scale of the problem as a weakness, but because the document itself presents it as a strength, the negative implication was credited only in conjunction with recognition of the positive aspect (eg the under-estimate strengthens the claim that there is a serious problem, but reduces the reliability of the Counter as a guide to the actual statistics).

A few candidates unsuccessfully attempted to criticise the arithmetic involved in the Counter, for example by claiming that the stated annual rate was more than the appropriate multiple of the daily number (overlooking the fact that the figure claimed for 2 November was for less than a whole day). Criticisms that the statistics were not of much use because they were more than a year out of date were not credited.

- 3 Candidates seemed to find question 3 quite difficult, and fewer of them than on previous occasions gained high marks by either identifying more than one side of the issue or evaluating the criteria. Many of the evaluations offered were quite speculative, apparently because candidates found it hard to imagine how a licensing scheme would work. Nearly all candidates used ease of implementation as one of their criteria, but there was quite a lot of variation as to whether this referred to passing the law, persuading people to obtain a licence or policing the scheme once it had been introduced; a few candidates appropriately discussed the last of these as “ease of enforcement”. Effectiveness and fairness were potentially good choices of criteria, while, as on previous occasions, attempts to evaluate the choice by reference to public opinion were mostly too speculative to score more than 1 at best. Many candidates were concerned about the cost to the government of introducing and maintaining a licensing scheme, but most of them overlooked the fact that fees would presumably be charged to issue licences.
- 4 The candidates who had most difficulty in responding to question 4 seem to have approached it with a rather limited range of ethical principles and theories in mind, which they tried to apply whether they were appropriate or not. This may be one of the reasons why a significant minority of candidates misread the question, and discussed government policy instead of individual action. A few answers which would otherwise have achieved high marks did not do so because of this problem. In addition, some of those who did defend a choice for individuals were unable to maintain this focus throughout their discussion or when considering possible alternative choices. For example, instead of discussing the alternative that detectorists should keep finds for themselves, many said that they should “be allowed to keep” them. As this example demonstrates, it was still possible for at least some principles to be applied in much the same way to a *requirement* that detectorists behave in a particular way as they would be applied if the metal detectorists *chose* to behave in that way, and similarly marks for use of sources and quality of reasoning were not necessarily lowered by this misunderstanding.

Nearly all candidates were aware that they were expected to defend one choice and show why they had rejected at least one alternative. Most of them, but by no means all, chose to support the choice of reporting finds to the proper authorities. Perhaps with the help of Document 3, many candidates correctly identified the main alternatives to this choice as keeping the finds in a private museum or selling them on an internet auction site, but others offered “not report” as the alternative to “report”, which was not credited as a genuine alternative. Evidently, some of those who argued in favour of a different choice did so because they had misread Document 1 and did not realise that detectorists and landowners who hand in treasure are paid a substantial reward.

Not many free-standing principles were deployed on this occasion. Some candidates mentioned “finders keepers” in order to dismiss it, and a significant number made use of “Thou shalt not steal”, which most of them claimed as a distinctively Christian principle (an aspect of Divine Command ethics). Whereas some of these candidates explained why retaining artefacts could be interpreted as stealing them, others took it for granted.

There were still some candidates (albeit fewer than formerly) who applied a menu of theories to the issue as if they were all equally valid and moral agents could choose whichever gave them the result which suited them. Egoism and altruism tended to feature quite prominently in answers of this kind.

As usual, Consequentialism and/or Utilitarianism were used by most candidates, but the amount of development and the plausibility of the discussions varied considerably. The most persuasive answers explained that putting finds into a museum gives pleasure to many, whereas keeping or selling them gives pleasure only to the finder. A very few candidates perceptively questioned this evaluation, on the grounds either that not many

people visit museums or that because of restrictions on display space, many finds are put into storage and never seen by the public.

Various vague or implausible principles were claimed as “deontological” approaches. These included “You should always do the right thing” and “An action takes priority over the consequences”. Principles like this were used to generate a number of apparently arbitrary judgments, and at best tended to beg the question. A fair number of candidates attempted to apply the Categorical Imperative to this issue, and although this was not easy, a few of them deployed the Principle of Universalizability in ways which Kant himself would have recognized.

Libertarianism was one of the most popular choices of ethical theory, but there was significant variation in what candidates meant by it. Some espoused the naïve principle that everyone should be free to do whatever they wish, while others made use of Mill’s Principle of Liberty (sometimes referred to as the Principle of Harm). Both of these referred more naturally to the question of what restrictions the government might place on the actions of detectorists than to the choices which the detectorists themselves should make, although some candidates did use Mill’s principle to argue that finders should avoid harming other people by their choice. Paternalism (or “parentalism” as some candidates incorrectly spell it) was also quite a popular choice, but this was relevant more to the issue of public policy than of personal choice, except in the weak sense that it could be used to support a duty to obey the law.

Several candidates made unexpectedly creative use of another form of Libertarianism, namely the economic libertarianism of Robert Nozick. It was not immediately obvious that this principle had any application to the issue of metal detecting, since Nozick himself used it in relation to redistributive taxation, but several candidates realized that the principle that you should keep or at least control the use of whatever you have earned by your own efforts could be used to justify detectorists in keeping their finds.

Many candidates made good use of Document 2 to illustrate the benefits of reporting finds and of Document 3 to indicate the harm done by failing to do so. Because it was judged that candidates needed more background information to this topic than could conveniently be included in a prefatory note, that information was identified as Document 1. This misled some candidates into treating it with suspicion, on the grounds that they did not know who wrote the document, which they thought might therefore lack credibility.

F504 Critical Reasoning

General Comments

This paper seems to have elicited some very good responses and, therefore, some high marks were recorded by candidates. There also appears to be an even distribution of marks among candidates, suggesting the paper discriminated and differentiated candidates' abilities well. Candidates seemed to cope with time constraints very well, meaning that the time allowed was appropriate for the tasks which needed to be completed. It was pleasing to note that there were very few mistakes concerning the rubric, with only question 1 causing issues here. It seemed as though very few candidates used Document 6 at all, with this document unfortunately appearing to be seen as virtually irrelevant to the question paper by candidates.

Comments on individual questions

- 1 Many candidates answered the question by referring to each document one by one (Documents 1 to 3 in separate sections) rather than assessing all of the documents together – which was the point of the question. Examiners therefore had to take this into consideration when marking this question. The best candidates answered the question by looking at the totality of Documents 1 to 3.

Candidates who recognised that correlation is not the same as cause in the evidence in Document 2 generally accessed the higher levels. Most candidates recognised that “it could not be reliably concluded...” and those who did not tended to get Level 1 or low Level 2 marks. The best candidates linked information from all three documents to arrive at a fully justified answer

- 2 A majority, but not an overwhelming one, thought Document 5 was an argument; in which case they could not access Level 4 marks. Better candidates, those reaching the top of Level 3 or into Level 4, either noted there was no conclusion or an implied but not stated conclusion. Most candidates who said “there was a conclusion” gave an incorrect conclusion, for example “we can take next step in ending child labour” and were Level 2 or lower. However, those who recognised the (implied) conclusion of “you can...support CARE act” could access Level 3 marks.

A small minority of candidates treated this question as if it was a pure analysis exercise. These candidates gained some credit if they identified the central argument elements such as ‘evidence’ or ‘counter assertion’. Generally, it seems a good idea to vary the format of the analysis question which otherwise can become too repetitive; using a Document that was ‘almost but not quite’ an argument seems to have been a good discriminator and elicited a broader distribution of marks – especially as there was no “cap” for a “wrong” conclusion which has often happened in the past.

- 3 Most candidates came to a judgement which was supported at least to some extent by their evaluation. Most were able to make some valid evaluative comments about Document 4 with the better candidates providing a very detailed evaluation with a good understanding of both strengths and weaknesses and the extent to which these affected the overall reasoning. Evaluations of Document 5 were generally less justified as they tended to argue that there was more effective reasoning in Document 5 although this was often based on credibility reasons, for example expertise, use of formal language, evidence of reliable sources like legal documents. A number of candidates over-estimated the quality of reasoning in Document 5 even when they had noted the many flaws in reasoning in Document 5 for Question 2.

- 4 The best candidates used their own ideas to argue the question rather than recycling information from the resource booklet. The better candidates incorporated useful definitions into their arguments which illuminated their argument. However some candidates levered definitions into their answers which did not inform their argument and were therefore merely redundant or red herrings. An example of this lack of definition is that it tended to produce conflation of “children working” with “child labour”. Overall, this question seemed to inspire some very good answers and almost all candidates had something constructive and sensible to say on the topic. It produced less trivial or outlandish ideas than some earlier topics.

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