

# Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE A2 H452

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H052

## OCR Report to Centres

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**January 2012**

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

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

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**Advanced GCE Critical Thinking (H452)**

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# Overview

## Chief Assessor Report

This January series evidenced improved quality of performance especially at the A boundaries at AS level, where the strongest answers were impassioned and cogent. The skills of analysis reached a standard hitherto unseen, especially in Unit 1 Q1. This increased performance is reflected in the percentage of candidates gaining a grade A.

There follows four key issues running across all units:

### Coherence

Answers as a whole were more coherent especially in Unit 1 Q10 and Unit 3 Q5, where candidates wrote convincing reasoned cases, whilst also focusing upon the tasks in hand. Additionally in Unit 2 Q24 and Q27, there was less use of spurious evidence, increasing the plausibility of the arguments.

The greater proportion of less productive mechanical answers in Unit 4 might be avoided by responding more directly to the characteristics of the type of passage presented.

### Style of answer

Candidates made strong attempts at new style questions, targeting their answers to the guidance in the questions. The alternative explanations in Unit 1 Q3(b) were plausible and wide ranging, and in Q9(b) candidates made an attempt to assess the overall credibility of a claim, some actively weighing up credibility criteria assessments, others simply stating an assessment with some justification. In Unit 2 Q24, there were strong responses to counter reasoning as well as those that were simply dismissive of it. In Unit 4 Q1 there was evidence of some recognition of the need to summarise the logical progression of key ideas, as well as those who analysed the passage unnecessarily.

When faced with differences in question types it is important to identify the aim of the question and to work out how best to achieve this, rather than falling back on learned formulaic responses which might not target the marks.

### Length of answer

Many heeded the pointers from June 2011, such that answers were more tightly focused, with the use of separate additional answer sheets being the exception. Both Unit 3 and Unit 4 answers benefited from the change to the online marking answer booklet, which appeared to give greater guidance as to the length of answer anticipated. Some answers to Unit 3 Q4 were still disproportionately long, as were some of those to Unit 2 Q24 and Q 27.

Candidates need to tailor their responses to the marks available in the longer questions, to avoid curtailed responses elsewhere.

## **Legibility**

The overall quality of handwriting is good. Where it continues to be an issue with some candidates, it is impacting upon the marks available across the units. As the meaning of an answer can turn on a single word, it is essential that handwriting is clear, so that the exact meaning can be determined.

Where legibility is known to be a problem exam dispensation for typewritten scripts may be possible.

## F501 Introduction to Critical Thinking

### General comments

Performance was even across both sections, building to a clear and spirited exploration of the two alternatives in Q10.

The strongest performance was evidenced in Q1, Q3(b)(ii) and in exceptionally focussed answers in Q9(a). Many found it challenging to express the assumption in Q4 and to apply the credibility criteria appropriately to Big Brother Watch in Q7. Q10 was the most discriminating.

Timing was handled well with few instances of questions not being answered. Most candidates made a serious attempt to answer all the questions, especially Q10, where responses were full bodied. Almost all were able to complete their answers within the allocated space. Use of the additional pages was the exception, demonstrating more succinct, precisely focused answers across the whole performance range.

Specialist terms were widely used, especially credibility criteria, although not always in Q10 where implication sometimes superseded explicit use of these. Occasionally candidates invented derivatives such as “biasedly”, “neutrally”, “neutralism” as well as using “vested interest to withhold”. “Incredible” sometimes replaced not credible such that Dr Albrecht became an “incredible source”. There was a misreading or misinterpretation of causal link as “casual” link/relationship which led to some misquotation in Q9(a) and occasionally affected evaluation in Q6.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Section A

- 1 This question as a whole exhibited a high degree of accuracy with strong performance recognising the need for precise reference to the text.
  - (a) Most tended to find the conclusion in the correct area and the strongest stated this without omission.
  - (b) Many gained the full 6 marks. A minority continued into the example(s), gaining partial performance marks.
  - (c) This was well answered. Some gained partial performance marks by running both the examples together. Others, having already included these in Q1(b), looked incorrectly elsewhere, notably to the organisations that were congratulated.
  - (d) Many identified the correct claim, with a number missing out either “popular” or “to micro-chipping”.
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  - (a) Many recognised this as being counter and the strongest also identified that it was an assertion, rather than a counter-argument.
  - (b) Most were able to access one of the marks by explaining counter and a smaller number also explained what an assertion means.

- 3 (a) The majority of correct answers recognised the size of the positive response and that the survey was conducted amongst the group most affected. A few used the credibility of the RSPA and where this was related to their ability to produce reliable evidence, it could be credited. Those that simply paraphrased the evidence in the survey rather than assessing why it was strong could not be credited.
- (b) (i) Many recognised that the key change was that the police were no longer responsible for picking up stray dogs. The strongest went on to explain how this led to an increase in the dogs needing to be picked up. A few were under the misapprehension that licences and/or micro-chipping had already been introduced in 2008/9. Others thought that they were being asked about an 11% increase in the number of stray and abandoned dogs rather than an increase in those picked up, whilst some thought the law being referred to was that of 2010 requiring dog collars. These answers could not be credited. Some merely explained the change, rather than offering an explanation for the change.
- (b) (ii) Many used the 2008 credit-crunch/recession to answer part (ii) correctly. Again some explained why the number of strays might have increased, rather than the number *picked up*. The number of strays is a factor determining the number picked up, but some claimed the number increased because “no one was picking them up” which was not the case. This question required an explanation for the sudden change in 2008–9, and some answers merely explained general reasons for a change, such as dog food being expensive.
- 4 Many found it challenging to express the assumption. Strong answers focused upon either the local authorities having access to data being a bad thing or that local authorities would want to misuse the data. Some gained partial performance for challenging the truth of the claim. A number restated or paraphrased what was argued explicitly, probably implying that this might not be true and could not be credited.
- 5 Providing a reason without including other argument elements continues to challenge many, but in this instance there were more reasons focusing relevantly upon the claim given.
- 6 Most gained the two basic marks; one for a reference to the reasoning and one for some assessment of the reasoning. Many misidentified the conclusion as “The body of research ... in mice and rats”. Those that recognised the correct conclusion (gaining the third mark), often went on to assess the link, identifying that the reasoning did not include humans/animals in general (thus gaining the fourth mark).

## Section B

- 7 Many found it challenging to make appropriate credibility assessments about Big Brother Watch. The most successful were those that used vested interest. Those that attempted to use expertise or bias strayed into speculation and often rant. Some assessed an individual, the Campaign Director, not relating this to the actual document; whilst others limited their marks by choosing textual references that did not support their chosen criteria. Some answers over-generalised that because it was a .org website, it could be ascribed expertise, or reputation or a lack of these.
- 8 Most accurately identified the Dogs Trust claim. Many tried to use the MP’s claim about a one-off payment as the second claim, missing that this does not refer to its size. A significant number gave correct claims without any source.

- 9 (a) There were some excellent answers to Q9(a), with many correctly applying the credibility criteria to the claim rather than the person. There were many strong assessments which did well to avoid the usual confusion between bias and vested interest.
- 9 (b) Most candidates gave a clear judgement and were able to support this by reference to the credibility criterion which they considered to be the most important. The strongest answers also mentioned this in conjunction with other criteria and the very best of these explained why this was much stronger by weighing up the criteria applied.
- 10 This was often well reasoned and convincing. The strongest answers clearly identified the sides and developed the credibility criterion to explain why one side was stronger than another. They were also able to draw together points from throughout the text and their own ideas to compare the plausibility of both sides. Some were unable to access two strong areas for plausibility, because they chose to explore why micro-chipping dogs would be effective and followed this with why licences would not be effective, which in effect was the same side. They either needed to go on to explore why micro-chipping dogs would be ineffective or why dog licences would be effective.

The strongest answers made an overall conclusion as to whether micro-chipping would be the most *effective* way to ensure that all dogs and their owners are easily identified. Others offered conclusions that were less focused such as “We should go ahead with micro-chipping” or “I agree with micro-chipping” which could not access the relevant mark. There was a tendency in some answers to quote claims verbatim from many of the sources which led to some unnecessarily lengthy essays, as the references to the text could be relevant phrases or single words, as in the mark scheme sample answer.

Overall, answers demonstrated that many had acquired a sound, pro-active understanding of argument and were able not only to identify individual elements, but also to produce their own well grounded reasoned assessments.

## F502 Assessing and Developing Argument

### General comments

In F502 this January, candidates appeared to find the multiple choice questions more straightforward than in previous series, although they continue to find questions relating to intermediate conclusions challenging.

As in previous series, 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. Candidates who took the time to plan generally did well.

The passage appeared to interest candidates and they were able to engage with it well, particularly on the analogy question (Q22) and in evaluation of the use of evidence (Q23).

In Section B, many candidates gave generic explanations or evaluations. To gain full credit, answers often need to justify or explain in the context of the passage itself, not just from a generic point of view.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Section A – Multiple Choice

Note that the mark scheme includes an analysis and rationale for each question. The comments below do not reproduce this rationale.

- 3 The vast majority of the candidates were split between options C and D.
- 4 A large number of candidates went for option A, the intermediate conclusion in the passage. Use of the 'therefore test' to check between the two conclusions in the passage and their order may have helped.
- 7 Many candidates went for option B which cannot be safely chosen as there may be other factors relevant in the running of the economy, in relation to which the two groups may differ.
- 9 About half of the candidates went for option B. In general, assumptions are not stated in the argument. Statements that are present in an argument (whether true or not) and which support a conclusion are reasons.
- 10 About half of the candidates went for option A. There is nothing in the passage which supports this statement so it cannot be an intermediate conclusion.
- 12 A significant minority went for option C, which does not imply that human activity is not causing global warming, or causing it to be worse than it is. Hence it does not necessarily weaken the argument.
- 14 A number of candidates went for each of the incorrect options, particularly option D. Options A, B and D do not need to be assumed for the conclusion to follow, whereas option C does.

## Sections B and C

- 16** The vast majority answered this question correctly, although a small minority copied out the whole of the paragraph to include the intermediate conclusion as well as the main conclusion and so did not gain full marks.
- 17** Nearly all candidates achieved full marks on this question.
- 18** The majority of candidates answered Q18(a) correctly. In many cases candidates struggled to justify their answer in Q18(b). The best answers very clearly pointed out the structure, showing in context what the reason and conclusion were. Answers which focussed on explaining the element of persuasion were generally not as convincing.
- 19** A small number of candidates gave answers to Q19(a) which were not argument elements. There is a list of these in the specification, and teachers are advised to ensure that candidates know them.

As in Q18, the explanations in Q19(b) were sometimes generic, without the required “reference to the text”. The best answers pointed out that the argument element supported the main conclusion – thus explaining that it is a *reason* as well as explaining its hypothetical nature in context.

Q19(c) differentiated well. The best answers clearly explained why the consequence may not follow. Many candidates simply gave counters to the statement that the money would be spent on better things which, although credited, is not the same as evaluating whether the hypothetical reason works and supports the general argument.

- 20** This was a new type of question, and the majority of candidates answered it well. A small number were unsure of the meaning of the word “inference”. The most common answers focussed on the assumption that the author was thought to have made: that ball games would help to address the problem of obesity. A popular error was to express this too strongly and to say that obesity was caused by the lack of ball games. The expected answer that the council was wrong to ban ball games was not given by many candidates. It is recommended that teachers discuss the subtle difference between inference and assumption.
- 21** The majority of candidates answered Q21(a) correctly, but a popular incorrect answer was “appeal to history”. In Q21(b) it was clear that many candidates confused appeal to history and appeal to tradition. The better answers gave justifications for why the appeal did not give strong support to this particular argument, as the sole contributing reason. Examples of weaker answers which only received partial credit were generic responses and counter-statements to the appeal.
- 22** In Q22(a), a small number of candidates just copied out the relevant section of the paragraph, which did not answer the question and communicate the situations being compared in a precise way. Most candidates chose to answer in continuous prose, rather than by itemising the elements of the analogy. The prose approach is fine as long as it communicates precisely the elements being compared. Examples of this are shown in the mark scheme. Common errors were:
- Element X (“wasted” and “unpleasant/neglected/worthless”): stating that both muscles and parks were “wasted” or “ruined”. This is an example of imprecision.
  - Element Y (“no exercise/without exercise” and “under-used”): stating “no use” or “under-used” for muscles when it is “without exercise” in the passage, or stating “no use” for parks instead of “under-used”.

The best answers to Q22(b) pointed out a similarity or difference in the analogy and explained how this affected the support that the analogy gave to the argument that more should be done with the park space. Weaker answers pointed out a similarity or difference, often in some detail, but with no attempt to explain how this affected the support for the argument.

- 23** Many candidates gave counter-statements or arguments which disagreed with or challenged the evidence. This is not the same as an evaluation of the limitations in the way the evidence is *used*. Many candidates ended their answer with a statement such as “this strengthens the claim” or “this weakens the claim”, which by itself is not credit-worthy. The best answers explained this point with a *specific* reference to the part of the claim that was affected by the evaluation.

Many candidates identified that the evidence of one borough was being used to support a general claim about councils. Others identified that the amount of money spent by councils cannot be used as evidence of inefficient spending, and that a conflation of the two was being made in the article.

- 24** Some candidates were able to give a relevant and valid counter-argument, and an effective response. Some, however, gave simplistic counter-assertions, such as “Some say there should NOT be a greater number of activities provided by the government for young people, but they are wrong”.

In general, answers were not excessively long, and there was more evidence than in the past of candidates using the effective strategy of planning their answers on the additional pages.

There were fewer examples of invented evidence being included in the place of reasoning than in Q27. It is recommended that teachers advise candidates to think of their reasons first, and then use extra argument elements in addition to these, not in place of them. Again, a few minutes spent planning before writing helps candidates to write high quality further arguments that score well.

- 25** Many candidates achieved full marks although some included another element along with their hypothetical reason. In most cases this was an intermediate conclusion that followed from the outcome of their ‘if ... then ...’ statement. A sizeable minority simply gave a statement which could support, without it being hypothetical.
- 26** A number of candidates gave a claim that was either too specific to be classed as a principle or too vague or generalised to give more than limited support to the argument. The examples in the mark scheme should be instructive.
- 27** Many candidates wrote good answers which scored well, with a clear structure and good use of an intermediate conclusion that did more than just summarise the reasons given before. There were fewer examples of rhetorical arguments than in previous sessions, perhaps because the subject matter was less emotive. A number of candidates lost the focus of the conclusion being about ball games *in parks*, and this was to the detriment of their argument.

A number of candidates gave invented evidence or embellished examples which were in the place of reasoning. The focus needs to be on clear reasons, which are then developed through intermediate conclusions. Additional argument elements can be used to enhance the reasons and intermediate conclusions and help to make the argument flow, but they should not be in place of them.

## F503 Ethical Reasoning & Decision-making

### General comments

Many scripts were set out well and presented in legible handwriting. Fewer scripts than last year were hard to read, but a few scripts were barely legible and those candidates may have unintentionally been penalized because – despite their best efforts – markers failed to understand what they were trying to say.

### Comments on individual questions

- 1 Two answers were considered to be particularly significant, and many candidates focused on one or other of them. These related to the representativeness of the case of the 29-year-old woman and the causal fallacy in the example of Denise van Outen. Many of these answers gained only 2 marks, because they were not explained fully. A few candidates thought that the two examples referred to the same person, and that Denise van Outen had died at the age of 29.

Two other popular answers were judged to be less significant, and awarded a maximum of 2 marks. One of these answers identified a causal fallacy in the case of the 29-year-old woman, while the other pointed out that a ban on using sunbeds under the age of 18 would not have directly affected Denise van Outen, because she was 18 when she used a sunbed.

A few candidates gained 1 mark for a generic answer, such as that one should not generalize from a single example. 0 marks were awarded for saying that the statistics were out of date or that Denise van Outen is not representative because she is famous. A few candidates made several points briefly, instead of explaining a single point in full, as the question had asked them to do.

- 2 Quite a lot of valid answers were available for this question (the markscheme lists seven points which could be made), and many candidates achieved full marks. Most recognised that there were two sides to the issue, and thereby achieved at least 2 marks. Some candidates thought it significant that the statistics did not mention the age of patients, but this is irrelevant and this answer was therefore not credited.
- 3 Most candidates understood what this question intended, namely an explanation of Duncan Bannatyne's vested interest in part (a) and an assessment of the extent to which it had actually influenced his evidence in part (b). A few missed the word "this" in part (a), and gave a general explanation of what is meant by the technical term "vested interest", while a few either referred to the specifics of the passage in part (a) or omitted to do so in part (b). A complete explanation in part (a) required candidates to identify what it was about Bannatyne which gave him a vested interest (his ownership of health clubs operating sunbeds), the nature of his vested interest (to oppose restrictions on sunbeds) and what it might have led him to do (minimize the risks of sunbed use). To gain full marks in part (b), it was necessary to see that Bannatyne's presentation was partly, but not wholly, influenced by his vested interest, and to support this judgment by means of detailed reference to the document. Most candidates judged that his evidence was strongly influenced by his vested interest, and did not recognize that he admitted to the existence of some problems, such as the ability of a 15-year-old to gain admission to a sunbed in one of his clubs and the number of deaths from skin cancer.

- 4 Many candidates gained high marks in this question, by making balanced assessments and/or evaluating the importance of their chosen criteria as well as applying them. A good number also supported their judgments well by reasoning. A few candidates lost marks because they evaluated the issue instead of the specific choice presented to them.

As in previous sessions, a few candidates devoted more time to this question than was justified by the relatively low number of marks available. In particular, elegant introductory paragraphs explaining what the candidate is going to do are a waste of time, because there are no marks available for them. Some candidates wasted time by including in this question material which belonged in question 5.

Popular criteria included public health, cost/effects on the economy and ease of implementation. Examiners were shocked to be informed repeatedly that under-18s can easily obtain and use “fake ID” to claim that they are older than they are, but they accepted the claim, on the grounds that candidates have better expertise and ability to perceive on that matter than they do.

Some of the candidates who chose “effectiveness” as a criterion interpreted it as effectiveness in reducing the incidence of malignant melanoma, and in effect continued or repeated their discussion of public health. Child welfare also tended to overlap with public health. Many candidates chose public opinion as a criterion, but most of their answers were largely speculative. Unsatisfactory alleged criteria included “business”, “emotion”, “political” and “green issues”, but in some cases the evaluations attached to these criteria did have some value and were credited. “Sustainability” is becoming a popular criterion, but candidates who chose it on this occasion found it difficult to apply to this policy.

- 5 Overall, this question was done well. Nearly everyone understood the nature of the task, fewer candidates than in previous sessions omitting to refer to either principles or the resource documents. Most candidates structured their answers in the way that was expected, clearly identifying a choice at the beginning of their answer, defending that choice from the perspective of various principles, supporting their discussion by reference to the resource documents and concluding by re-affirming their choice in the light of their discussion. A few candidates lost marks by basing their discussion mainly on the source documents, instead of using these to support an argument based on principles.

A fair number of candidates achieved full marks for the use of principles. The most popular principles used were Utilitarianism, Libertarianism and Paternalism, which were a good choice on this occasion, because they offered appropriately contrasting approaches to this issue. Some candidates identified and applied several principles which were roughly equivalent to one another (such as Consequentialism, Utilitarianism, Prudentialism and Social Ethics) and their evaluations were therefore largely repetitive, which significantly reduced their marks. As on previous occasions, some candidates referred briefly to a large number of ethical principles, which is less successful than developing the application of a few principles.

Candidates who explained why a principle (such as Paternalism) might be relevant to the issue were credited more highly than those who simply applied it. Some of the applications of Utilitarianism were rather superficial, comparing consequences only by reference to numbers or intensity, rather than including probability and duration in the calculation, and some of the judgments resulting from such analysis were unconvincing.

A number of candidates claimed that “Kantian” or “deontological” ethics means that certain actions are intrinsically wrong, and they then claimed that the use of sunbeds was such an action. Some of them asserted this without giving any reasoning to support the claim, whereas others explained it by reference to consequences. This suggests that some candidates have an inadequate understanding of deontological ethics.

Quite a few candidates referred to the *prima facie* duty of non-maleficence, although they tended to conflate the duty not to harm others with an alleged duty to prevent them from harming themselves, which is not the same thing. Some mentioned beneficence and a few made creative use of the duty of self-improvement. Some candidates persuasively claimed that tanning booth operators are treating their clients as means to their own ends, but most of them omitted the crucial word “only” from their exposition of Kant’s principle. Those candidates who tried to apply the Principle of Universalizability to this issue tended to find it quite difficult. Most of the references to Natural Law were fairly superficial (for example, criticizing sunbeds for being unnatural), but a few candidates made creative use of Aquinas’s principles of survival and the propagation of species.

There was a lot of good evaluation of sources in relation to both credibility and the quality of reasoning, and a significant number of candidates recognized that credible documents may have some weaknesses, while documents with strong vested interest may say something valid. A few candidates commented on the resource documents without using them to support their reasoning, which was not credited.

There was quite a wide variety in the quality of reasoning. A fair number of candidates divided their answers into paragraphs (one point per paragraph and one paragraph per point), ending each with a summative intermediate conclusion. In other cases, it was hard to follow the thread of the discussion. Quite a lot made good use of pertinent comparisons with age limits in other areas of life, such as the age of consent (16), smoking and consumption of alcohol.

Nearly all candidates made some attempt at referring to and rejecting a possible alternative choice, but some of the alternatives consisted simply of contradictions (eg not banning under-18s), in which case the reasons in favour and against the alternative were indistinguishable from those against and in favour of the candidate’s preferred choice. A few candidates identified as their conclusion what they would not want (eg not banning under-18s) instead of defending a specific positive choice. A small number of candidates devoted the whole of their discussion to attacking an alternative, not mentioning their own preferred choice until the final paragraph, while a few others changed their minds during the course of writing the essay and ended by rejecting the choice they had been defending.

## F504 Critical Reasoning

### General comments

Candidates responded to the themes of family and responsibility, often with some passion. There was evidence of thoughtful response to the issues and strong critical thinking skills from many candidates. However, there was an increase in the proportion of mechanical responses seen.

### Comments on individual questions

- 1 This was a new style of question, testing candidates' ability to deal with authentic material which contained reasoning but which was not an argument.

Most candidates were able to express the author's main point, and some were able to summarise her reasoning. Many candidates analysed the article in some detail rather than summarising. Some of these managed to identify a main conclusion, even though the passage was not an argument, and therefore did not have a main conclusion. A significant proportion of candidates quoted evidence and examples rather than summarising the logical progression of significant ideas (ie summarising the reasoning).

- 2 This was a familiar style of question, testing whether candidates can identify argument and distinguish it from other forms of writing, such as explanation, report, anecdote, opinion, and also whether candidates are able to decide whether an anecdote or explanation, whilst not argument in itself, might play a part in a larger argument.

The strongest responses discussed whether this passage was an argument as a whole, with anecdotes, explanations and opinions used in order to support the conclusion that "we should begin encouraging a return to the days when extended families lived together." Many of these strong responses concluded that there was an argument with this conclusion in paragraph 3, but that the anecdotes and opinions did not provide logical support for it, they merely accompanied it. Others did argue that all of the reasoning was of use in supporting the conclusion, and that the passage was an argument, although not a tightly argued one.

Most candidates said that the passage was an argument, identified the main conclusion as "we should begin encouraging a return to the days when extended families lived together," and either paraphrased or analysed the passage in some detail. There was significant focus on itemising the argument elements and claiming that because, for example, evidence and counter-argument were present, the passage must be an argument. This represents confusion about the task. Where candidates are required to analyse in detail, they will be told to do so. It is highly unlikely that candidates would be expected to analyse such a lengthy passage in detail.

A significant minority of candidates analysed the passage in detail, claiming that the last line, "taking on our family responsibilities also means more love," was the conclusion. This represented a fundamental misunderstanding of both the task and the passage.

- 3 Again, this was a familiar question, testing whether candidates can decide whether the reasoning in one passage is stronger than in another, and whether they can justify this decision with reference to key strengths and weaknesses in the reasoning.

The strongest responses went straight to the heart of the matter, making key points, comparing and weighing up strength and weakness. For example, some candidates argued that Document 1 was trying to achieve less, supporting a weaker claim, because less persuasion is needed (either rational or logical) to get people to agree that fathers should take responsibility for their children than to get people to agree that we should live as extended families. Stronger responses tended to note real weaknesses in the reasoning, such as in Document 2 there is an unsupported assertion that the disintegration of the family is the cause of loneliness; a number of unsupported claims which are quite significant, such as that “we are most responsible for those closest to home – our families”, and “taking on our family responsibilities also means more love”; there is a counter-argument which is not well answered, and which could be considered to be a straw person flaw, as it deals only with the minor aspects of the difficulties of extended family life, ignoring significant difficulties. These responses weighed up whether these real weaknesses were more or less significant than the weaknesses in Document 1, such as the conflation/confusion about who should take responsibility for the children of teenage parents – the father, the government, us all.

A significant proportion of candidates did not focus on logical weakness or strength but discussed the presence of particular argument elements, such as evidence or counter-argument, or on their agreement or disagreement with particular claims. Others from this group attributed flaws where there were none.

- 4 Most candidates had an opinion to express in response to the stimulus, “Responsibility should be taken more seriously in the modern western world.”

The strongest responses reasoned from, “we don’t take responsibility seriously enough” in areas such as global warming, international relations, our duty to the poor and family, jointly with, “responsibility is a serious matter because of our duties/the consequences of ignoring our responsibilities” to show that we should take it more seriously. Some of these candidates compared an eastern sense of responsibility with the western sense. These candidates generally considered what responsibility was, in terms of doing our duty, taking care of things, taking the blame for things, and/or considered the differences between individual, social and governmental responsibilities.

A great many candidates expressed their opinions at length, with little or no reasoning, either on the lack of responsibility in the country in general or on single parent and teenage families in general. These candidates tended to assume that responsibility meant taking the blame or sorting the country out.

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