

## **General Studies**

Advanced GCE A2 H479

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H079

## **OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2012**

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

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

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**Advanced GCE General Studies (H479)**

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## Overview

In this introduction, the views of the senior examination team focus on the key points and issues that have arisen during the summer season. General Studies continues to be a clear indicator of a student's ability to think, synthesise and present a reasoned case in written form. These are the important skills required for Higher Education study and it is pleasing to note the level of depth and engagement in which candidates have explored a wide and varied range of source material as well as dissecting and answering questions that are aimed to provoke an enquiring mind.

At AS level, it is important to read the stem of each question to ensure that full coverage is given to all of its detail and content. The level of depth that is required in furnishing a response is indicated by the number of marks that are awarded. There were still a large number of cases where candidates spent too long on questions with a low mark tariff or attempting to answer all of the essay questions when only one was required. In general, the inclusion of personal experience added strength to many responses though there were a large number of essays that contained repeated ideas and suggestions thereby revealing a lack of review and reflection. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of the UK political system and an appreciation of the Arts still remain of great concern to examiners.

At A2, synoptic writing continues to show signs of real progress and improvement as centres appear to have grasped the importance of making links and connections between the three General Studies domains. Though the overall quality remains steady it is important to maintain a focus on evaluation techniques when writing at this high level. It will be useful to identify and acquire knowledge of the domain content and then spend time making distinctions between them. In this way, it is hoped that connections and common characteristics will emerge that will point the way towards synoptic thinking and writing. However, centres are warned not to encourage the use of pre-prepared, often generic material that candidates use to answer a question that contains only the flimsiest of links to the subject-matter presented. Many topics require an appreciation of local, national and global perspectives that were sadly lacking from many essays at both AS and A2 level.

Handwriting and presentation remain satisfactory. Examiners concluded that the overuse of ICT is having a negative effect on candidates' written work. This is of great concern since the majority of examinations require the skilled use of written English. Centres are encouraged to provide the opportunity for candidates to prepare and present examination answers under timed conditions in order to practice the planning, execution and review of their work. The weaker candidates in the session shared the general problem of poor preparation and incomplete scripts.

The General Studies team continues to make efforts to engage candidates through a range of interesting tasks that will unlock their intellectual potential to combine a spectrum of skills across the full range of school subjects. This fusion of knowledge is unique to this specification and acts as an indicator of educational potential and the ability to think in a considered yet precise way. Whilst examiners acknowledge that UK centres contain many fine students of great ability there remains some concern about the breadth of their knowledge and appreciation of contemporary culture, science and society. In the light of this, centres are asked to review their course content and structure and consider the inclusion of subject matter that is both included in the specification and representative of today's world.

## F731 The Cultural and Social Domains

### General Comments

The paper offered candidates a range of questions which included varying styles of source material for the candidates to engage with and demonstrate their ability to think and develop a reasoned response. Overall it appears that the Cultural Domain remains the weakest area as there was clear evidence that candidates were relying much more on their wits rather than basing their work on ideas that were current, contemporary and within the scope of their life experience. In this respect, the Social Domain clearly produces fuller, more informed responses possibly due to the fact that much of our everyday experience involves interaction and consideration of social issues (like the family and education). A theme of many previous reports has been the neglect of arts and culture and this was quite clear from the quality of answers in Section A. The specification lists a number of areas relating to art that should be considered and candidates are asked to be familiar with at least two. However, in contrast, Section C, notably question 5 on education, saw answers that were at best polished and informed with reference to real-life experience, but at worse assertive and incorrect based on assumptions and misconceptions. In addition, examiners continue to be concerned about the general lack of appreciation and understanding of the British political system that forms a major part of the specification content of the Social Domain.

The approach of candidates, and their preparation for the examination by centres, is clearly improving. Most significantly, there is evidence that the short answer questions are being tackled in a way that ensures the best access to full marks by providing supporting statements and examples. However, it is disappointing to see the longer questions that are worth ten and twelve marks remaining unexploited through a lack of extension to the material or some elaboration to convince the examiner that the argument presented is a plausible and secure one.

Essay writing is slowly improving though it is important to remind candidates of the need for a secure structure that covers the main elements and key words of the question as well as framing the response with a suitable introduction and conclusion. Hanging a response on this tried and tested structure invariably gives an essay solidity and enables the candidate to work within a reliable framework that enables fluent communication with the examiner. To this end, clearly constructed sentences and paragraphs can only add to the success and, subject to the quality of the arguments, lead to the awarding marks in the higher bands.

It remains the case that some candidates attempt all of the essays in Sections B and D, with sometimes large numbers from one centre doing the same. General Studies, like all other examinations, demands that candidates are familiar with the rubric, form and style of the papers and this should be covered as a matter of course in a centre's preparation for the examination.

### Question 1

- a) A number of candidates copied phrases from the text such as 'it would elevate the status of artists' if there was full funding which would not be the case without funding. However, by reading the passage carefully and appreciating the contrast with competition, it was possible to construct answers that highlighted freedom to pursue their own direction as opposed to the need to engage the public. Some ignored Source A and offered their own unrelated contrasts.

- b) i) There were a number of straight paraphrases but most acquired the idea of gaining more respect or recognition of the artists' work.
- b) ii) Weaker candidates resorted to rearranging the wording of the phrase but most grasped the point that it would make artists work to the best of their abilities due to the competition that they would face.
- c) There was a range of interesting reasons given but simply asserting that the public found the arts boring did not warrant full marks.. The state of the economy was a common theme leading to families not having the spare cash for non-essentials or that adults were too preoccupied with work to have time or energy for arts events. New technologies were recognised as being able to offer people a similar or better experience in the comfort of their home. Class issues were mentioned quite often as it seems that ordinary people are put off by the prospect of associating with the upper classes who look down on the less privileged and educated.
- d) Unfortunately, some answers never actually identified an event but wrote in very general terms about 'activities'. The claim that a food festival or a fun-fair were arts events was not accepted by examiners. However there were some sensible and detailed suggestions often based on actual events held in the candidates' own locality. The best answers saw the revelation of specific details of how all aspects of the brief would be met but many weaker attempts described the event and then simply copied the text asserting 'this would ensure excellence...' and so on. Only a minority used this question as an opportunity to demonstrate any very detailed knowledge about the arts.

## Question 2

This question proved to be unpopular with most candidates though the issue of revelation is an integral part of the Cultural Domain specification. Successful responses often chose contrasting 'moments' that either featured a range of scales (personal, national, global) or moments with both positive and negative outcomes. The careful selection of supporting knowledge and personal experience were key ingredients of good essays. Weaker answers focused on the cause of such moments, not their significance. The question, by its nature, related to less concrete concepts so candidates generally avoided it. However with some clear definition and examples it was possible to construct and develop an engaging response that clearly demonstrated an understanding of the importance of moments of truth in the life of a person. One very good example saw the candidate write sincerely about a personal religious revelation with a detailed explanation of its significance to their life and in addition described a moment of truth experienced whilst working as a volunteer in a deprived African country.

Students from Islamic backgrounds wrote good answers based on their understanding of the Koran and Islamic history. These examples contrasted with other candidates who wrote about their football team winning a trophy which was significant as it meant they could be entered for another competition. This is probably the result of the media who tend to claim the most trivial of events as 'a moment of truth', most notably in sport, thereby debasing the concept.

## Question 3

This was by far the most popular question of the cultural domain essays and virtually all candidates were able to find the required numbers of disadvantages and disadvantages of e-books. However there was a common problem of missing or ignoring the phrase 'as opposed to printed books'. There needed to be a distinction between the e-book and the e reader; many claimed that a Kindle was a book rather than an electronic device. However this did not seriously disadvantage most candidates and there were a number of very well- informed essays that went

beyond the standard points of portability, accessibility and cost. Only a few dealt effectively with the impact issue and with whether printed books would remain. Those who attempted the latter were clear book lovers, referring to the feel, smell of books, the delight of crisp new pages and the delight of having them on a shelf. There was also reference by a few to the value of being able to keep books as a memento from their childhood.

Despite living in the technology generation, it was encouraging to read of drawbacks such as the fact that one would not be able to celebrate the end of exams by the traditional book burning, or that there would be no more signed copies of first editions for people to collect and even that e-books do not make nice Christmas or birthday presents. Savvy candidates were concerned about compatibility issues with formats and devices in the future. Environmental issues were common when claiming advantages of e-books. Candidates seem unaware that the paper for books comes from ‘farmed’ trees and not from the Amazonian rain forests. However there were a number of common problems that emerged that suppressed the marks awarded such as:

- the planet would be saved from destruction by greenhouse gases because less trees were going to be chopped down to make printed books
- the economic downfall that would result from printers and book sellers going out of business as a result of the implementation of new technology.

#### Question 4

Most candidates were able to achieve a balance between fair and unfair, and could see that many celebrities ‘bring it on themselves’ though concern about the effects upon their families was a common theme. A wide range of examples were used including Katie Price, Jade Goody, Ryan Giggs and John Terry though at worse the comments offered were generalised, with little support, which was surprising, given the huge range of possible examples that there are to choose from. Overall the main conclusion was that the activities of the press were unfair and the “invasion of privacy versus they should get over it” argument featured as the backbone of a number of essays. Celebrities were generally seen as fame and wealth seekers who deserve everything they get as pay-back from lesser mortals. Little was made, on the press side, of commercial demand and public interest.

There was evidence of sound knowledge about phone hacking and the Leveson enquiry with some interesting discussions regarding press freedom. Inevitably there were some who could only see the press as being totally unfair to celebrities who ‘are normal people just like us and deserve their privacy’ and described in detail the ‘traumas’ suffered by the likes of Britney Spears and Paris Hilton. One disappointing feature was that not many candidates consider concepts such as the role of the press or the dilemma of press freedom, public interest and the right to privacy.

#### Question 5

- a) Candidates were given a great deal of help in the source with ideas on advantages and disadvantages. Most of the answers were sensible and, with a little development of only two of the points, a great many were able to score full marks. Suggestions included the ability to spend on what the school really needed particularly in deprived areas, the possibility of encouraging more student and parent involvement, and the greater flexibility of the curriculum and term times. There was some cynicism when it came to disadvantages claiming that heads would improve facilities for staff at the expense of the pupils. There were also highly improbable claims that heads would only appoint their friends onto the staff or even that they would make off entirely with the whole school budget to foreign parts!

- b) Most were able to identify ways such as sharing of facilities, the holding of master classes or even peer group teaching. There were a number of claims that ‘they could give them money’ which were not very convincing unless supported with meaningful examples. Some of the candidates had clearly experienced the benefits and drawbacks of academies and this proved to be a great advantage when developing their response.
- c) There was some misunderstanding of the term ‘free schools’ as candidates imagine that they offered the opportunity for students from less privileged backgrounds to study free of charge. This contemporary idea of schools set up by groups of parents seems not to have filtered through into the schemes of work of many centres. Candidates did recognise the problems of parents being unqualified to manage buildings and accounts, under-qualified teachers being appointed and subjects on the curriculum which would not prepare students for later life. The most commonly identified strengths were control over the curriculum and the ability to decide on term times and length of school day. In fact it was disappointing to note that a number of candidates used the same material they had used in question 5 a). Free schools were sometimes confused with home tuition and many assumed that all the teachers would be the parents who would inevitably show favouritism to their own children.
- d) For candidates whose secondary schooling had taken place at a school with a sophisticated, well-organised discipline system the question posed few difficulties. It was possible to include three sharply-focused ideas and promote their success with the support of actuality from the candidates’ own school experience. However, the reintroduction of the cane and even ‘capital’ punishment were examples of extreme measures that were both impractical and illegal. The question provided a good example of the opportunity for candidates to increase their marks by adding explanation and development to their ideas or, as has been suggested, some reference to their own experience. The opportunity was missed on occasions by simply providing a short, underdeveloped list of points.

## Question 6

It was encouraging to see so many well-informed and well-supported arguments on this topic. Clearly some centres have managed to engage some of their students with a genuine interest in politics and current affairs. Whilst educational issues, in particular university fees, tended to be up most in the minds of the majority, some others took a broader view looking at democracy in general, the sense of responsibility and self-worth which might deter students anti-social behaviour, and the fact that futures were being decided with no input from themselves.

Reasons against lowering the voting age included a lack of knowledge about politics, possible pressure from parents and peers and the necessity to enjoy childhood a little longer. Arguments about sixteen-year-olds being considered old enough to procreate, marry and serve in the armed forces were often cited. The best essays maintained a sense of balance and a good understanding of the different rates of maturity in teenagers with candidates thinking that it would increase the interest in politics which is in decline in many schools. It was also suggested that having a vote might well make sixteen-year-olds more responsible people, backed up with discussion of why this may be the case.

The very best answers introduced the essay with contextual information regarding the changes made in the past to voting eligibility, such as universal and female suffrage, arguing that change is needed over time and that nobody would now argue against those steps. Surprisingly, not all thought to offer a conclusion or personal view. A general ignorance of the political system was a slightly worrying conclusion drawn by many examiners.

### **Question 7**

This proved an unpopular question that produced very few effective answers. Sovereignty and self-determination were the hallmarks of good essay but these were very rare. Answers tended to discuss the EU in general terms, often with little clear grasp of its functions (even claiming, in one notable case, that we are not in it!) and did not examine in any detail the notion of national and European level governments co-existing. More focused answers, probably from politics students, were well-informed and exemplified and, as such, a pleasure to read. Knowledge of trade, currency, social issues and in one case fishing regulations where central control impacted on member countries were extremely welcome inclusions. Overall it is disappointing to see such lack of interest in this topic from students and an apparent neglect by centres to include it in their scheme of work.

### **Question 8**

This was a popular question with the better answers being focused on segregation, isolation, multiculturalism, community belonging and the provision of goods and services. Weaker responses lost focus and became a general discussion of the impact of migration. Sadly, the exact wording of the question was often missed, leading to long accounts about immigrants in general, usually based on sweeping generalisations which bordered on the offensive. Most assumed that all residents of ethnic minorities are recent arrivals, failing to recognise that generations of families may now have lived in this country and are not, therefore, immigrants. It was popular to assume that people of a range of ethnic groups might live in one area or street and might not wish to be integrated, and even fewer to think that this could be desirable. The support of answers with reference to areas with which the candidate was familiar proved to be a great advantage in accessing the higher mark bands but a number of essays suffered badly from a lack of exemplification.

## F732 The Scientific Domain

### General Comments

The overall performance of candidates, including the quality of written communication was good. Time appeared to have been used well and candidates provided evidence of being focused on the questions.

As mentioned in the last report, candidates should be reminded that the mark allocation defines the length of the response and the amount of detail required. In this session, it was clear that some candidates were writing too much in their responses to Questions 1 (a) and (b). These questions were only worth a few marks.

In the Scientific Domain it is important that candidates have calculator skills. The course content involves the use of mathematical skills gained at GCSE and unlocks a number of marks which are available in Section A. Weaker answers to Question 2(b) showed a lack of knowledge of algebraic skills and formulae transposition.

Mature vocabulary led to many well-expressed and well-constructed answers in Section B, in particular where examples and personal experience had been included. A large number of candidates were able to demonstrate specific knowledge from their General Studies course, from other AS courses as well as their own personal knowledge and experience. However, it was disappointing to see a lot of rubric errors. Candidates who provided **two** responses in Section B were not able to focus fully on the importance of the examined topic and these answers were therefore quite short with very few points offered. As a result, the awarding of marks higher than level 3 proved difficult. It is vital that centres stress to candidates the importance of reading the instructions at the beginning of each section.

In Section B, there were instances of some failure to tackle and define the key words of the question. For example in Question 3, there was reference to conflicts of interest and their resolution and this was invariably omitted by some candidates. In Question 4 it was felt that the stem of the question had not been read as a large proportion of responses did not display a link to the control of birth rates.

Often the introductions to essays were sparse and there is a need for a concise and meaningful conclusion. Candidates should allow enough time to write a balanced response and ensure that they cover all aspects of the question including these important features of essay structure. This would ensure a clear focus on the thrust of the question and provide a more complete answer. Overall handwriting was good, however some scripts presented problems of legibility. Assessment Objective 4 (Communication) is assessed throughout the paper and attention must be paid to the presentation, style and coherence of essays.

### Section A

#### Question 1

The central theme of this question was the understanding of the requirement of accuracy in scientific experiments.

- a) There were some very good answers to this part of the question. Candidates commented on the use of a five-litre bucket then developed this by pointing out that the difference in heights of the marks would be small, therefore nothing other than five litres could be measured accurately. There was reference to the problem of the water not being still as

John lifted his head out, coupled with the fact that it might be difficult to do this without part of the neck being included. Absorption of the water by clothes and hair, as John got out of the bath, was a frequently quoted inaccuracy of the experiment.

Weaker answers were seen where points were given but not developed, for example 'using a five-litre bucket' or 'the water moves'. The importance of a developed point is essential; the allocation of seven marks indicates the quality and detail of the response required.

- b) The most popular suggestions for improvement were to use an upright, calibrated container and to repeat the experiment to be able to calculate an average result. Some responses included the point that the experiment could have been conducted in reverse or that a measuring device with smaller units, for example millilitres, should have been used.

In weaker responses the suggested improvement merely repeated part of (a) or gave a very brief answer, for example 'tell John to keep still'.

## Question 2

This question involved the interpretation of data in two tables and a substitution into a formula. Where candidates had supported their answer by some correct working-out, some credit could be given even if the final answer was incorrect.

- a) i) Generally, most candidates realised that Table 1 was indicating that, as mass changed, the period of swing was not affected. In weaker responses there was simply a description of the numbers in the table.
- ii) In this part of the question it was important that candidates noticed that not only was the period of swing increasing but also the length of the pendulum.
- b) Where the substitution was applied correctly, and the formula manipulated to complete the calculation, full marks were awarded. However, a common error was to include the use of 20 as a substitution for T. This number appeared in the question following the use of the expression 'averaged over 20 swings', so candidates who failed to read the numbers in the question carefully put themselves at a disadvantage. In weaker answers only marks for the substitution could be awarded as there was no further evidence of calculations or algebraic manipulation.

Some common algebraic errors included:

- $20 = 2\pi\sqrt{(100/g)}$  where  $T = 20$  had been used, instead  $T = 2$
  - $4 = 2\pi \times 100/g$  where everything had been squared, except the ' $2\pi$ '
  - $4/2\pi = 100/g$  (which was correct) but followed by  $(4/2\pi) \times 100 = g$  showing incorrect manipulation
  - $2^2 = (2\pi)^2 (100/g)^2$  squaring all items but forgetting that there had been a square root to consider
  - using trial and error but with several incorrect answers. The only marks awarded were if some correct algebraic working out had been shown.
- c) There were some quite good responses to this part of the question. The most common answers included reference to the fact that the school experiment had not been conducted in a vacuum and also that there was no access to sophisticated equipment. However, many responses showed that candidates had not read the question fully resulting in a general lack of knowledge of the terms 'vacuum' and 'gravity' and no emphasis on why the school laboratory experiment differed.

## **Section B**

### **Question 3**

Good responses included concise descriptions of facilities for all groups and the possible conflicts that may arise, together with resolutions.

Some candidates presented some quite impressive ideas for example, the use of different space and time zones for leisure activities and students' investigations. From a commercial viewpoint, using former office buildings might encourage more visitors but the conflict with the environmental needs of the area for the other two groups might be more difficult to resolve. Reference was made to the idea of a community hall in these buildings, but to avoid unnecessary conflict with commerce it might be sensible to put out a questionnaire to the local residents in the first instance. In this way the costs of each group's needs could be prioritised. Using the buildings for a mining museum displaying local history might resolve a conflict between all groups as it would serve as an activity in which everyone could be involved. In a few responses, conflict and resolution was dealt with in relation to the suggested facilities rather than at the end of the essay as a conclusion.

Weaker responses merely included lists of activities, with no reference to conflicts, one of the key elements of the question. Omitting this point meant that marks could not be allocated at a high level. To enable a fuller response, candidates must be encouraged to read the question fully and understand its dimensions and implications before embarking on their written response. In some cases the number of activities mentioned did not take into account the size of the area available. In others, simple points such as 'they will wander into each other's activities' or 'keep them apart' were seen. Very little additional information in the form of personal experiences or examples was included thereby restricting the marks awarded.

### **Question 4**

The main feature that distinguished stronger from weaker responses was the approach to the disadvantages that linked to the main part of the question namely the controlling of birth rates because of overpopulation.

Personal experience was evident in the discussion of contraceptives and the one-child policy was dealt with by using the example of China. Candidates had obviously been well prepared for these two issues and included reference to the 'little emperor syndrome' and gender imbalance in the future. It was recognised that in some countries, a large family was seen as a wealthy one so this would make it more difficult for the policies to be implemented. Termination was dealt with sensitively by referring to the emotions of the mother.

Candidates were conscious of the fact that there was a cost attached to each method but in countries where there was the greatest need to control birth rates there was no access to the methods or no government funds available.

Most answers were solely concerned with describing methods and this resulted in lists of different contraceptive devices along with the ways in which religious objections could affect each one. In some of these responses, a more secure structure would have helped to tie together the thread of the main elements of the response.

## Question 5

The most popular examples related to the cost of fuel and of erecting a new building. It was very unusual to find a response that contained an example that was not on the list although forecasting examination grades and football matches were other examples used. Economic viewpoints lacked scientific connections. Candidates need reminding that this unit is concerned with forecasting, but in terms of scientific understanding.

Inaccuracies of forecasting the cost of fuel included some very good reasoning where the focus was on the discovery of new resources, for example oil fields. The global economy, the unrest in many of the oil rich countries and the future of cars running on different fuels led to some good discussion. The choice of forecasting the costs of erecting a new building was very popular but it was not always dealt with in a logical manner. Other good references included references to the weather, the cost of materials and other new factors that had not been anticipated. However, too many candidates listed these ideas without full consideration of the question's demands.

There were some interesting responses which included the inaccuracies of volcanic eruptions or flooding including reference to the possible lack of data. But again, there were very few examples of recent disasters which might have been used to develop a more extensive and supported essay.

The number of people likely to contract influenza was not as popular but invariably these answers were of good quality. For example the difficulty of predicting new strains of the virus, vaccination availability and the number of people who might be in contact with each other in some countries provided evidence of understanding and engagement.

Unfortunately in many responses, there was no reference to the forecasting of statistical or scientific investigations. The use of past events and data would have provided a good basis for discussion. Weaker responses made the choice of 'weather forecasting' but included very vague comments and unsupported comments, for example 'the weather/wind changes' and 'the forecasters are always wrong'.

# **F733 Domain Exploration: Applying Synoptic Skills**

## **General Comments**

Examiners were unanimous in their view that candidates had engaged fully with this paper and produced substantial, well thought-out answers. It is encouraging to see that centres and candidates are focusing on the differing demands of the two sections of the paper. In Section A, the first three questions require answers that require skills to be utilised as concisely as possible. Question 4 asks candidates to work with a source to produce a short synoptic essay using criteria from all three domains, cultural, scientific and social. It was pleasing to see so many candidates completing these fundamental tasks so effectively.

The importance of a knowledge base in Section A should not be underestimated. Fifteen marks are available for AO1 (knowledge and understanding) and AO3 (assessing the importance of various kinds of knowledge). In Question 3, many candidates did not know what Intermediate Technology was and so lacked a base on which to reveal and develop their analytical skills (AO2). Many candidates in Question 4 seemed uncertain of the difference between the social and cultural aspects of the experiment that they were required to analyse.

Section B is an opportunity to display a range of knowledge and understanding. It needs to be emphasised that General Studies does not simply rely on luck or the ability to improvise an answer. Whilst these qualities are valuable, a knowledge base is still very important otherwise even the best candidates will flounder.

Candidates' good use of time in the examination meant that most had time to consider and write a substantial response to Section B. Examiners were very pleased to note that very few papers had excessively long answers to Section A followed by a perfunctory and/or unplanned essay. Handwriting and the accuracy of communication continue to cause some concern. A growing number of word-processed scripts go some way towards mitigating these problems but centres should note that, in the preparation of electronic copies of answers, scripts should use double-spacing to allow for examiners to carry out the assessment process effectively.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

Most candidates found this question accessible, being able to distinguish fact from belief quite easily, and proposing some convincing reasons to justify their choice. The BMA was identified as being an authoritative body specialising in peer-reviewed research but there was less security in the comments on Carlos Santana (for example saying that, as a musician, he would know nothing about medicine). Better candidates identified his claim that eating meat causes negative emotions as being purely subjective. Few picked up on Santana's use of metaphorical - and hence unscientific - language.

### **Question 2**

Candidates found this question quite straightforward and many scored well. The most frequent choices of buying pattern were sweets, clothes and shoes, computer games and magazines and comics. In devising explanations - availability, price, peer pressure, gender stereotyping,

parental oversight and prohibitions, puberty, societal expectations - many candidates showed ingenuity and resourcefulness. A few candidates challenged the source but with little success.

### **Question 3**

This question proved to be a good discriminator. Given that Intermediate Technology is part of the KS3 Geography syllabus (as well as being included in this specification) it was both surprising and disappointing that so few candidates could define the term adequately or link its use to the Lao Tzu proverb. The standard answer to this question, a more or less detailed transliteration of the proverb, very often stalled at that point and few candidates were able to confidently link it to Intermediate Technology or give secure examples of such technology in use.

### **Question 4**

There were some very good answers to this question but the majority lacked the detail necessary to secure the highest mark level. To score well candidates needed to maintain a focus on evaluation at all times. Many wasted valuable time speculating about outcomes and, although there was sound work on the scientific aspects of the question, few candidates distinguished securely between the social and cultural domains.

## **Section B**

### **Question 5**

This proved to be a popular question producing some excellent work. It was evident that centres had prepared many candidates for the topic of religious belief and its connection to science. The determination of some candidates to use their pre-prepared material meant that the theme of the question - co-existence - became transformed into a more simplistic Darwin vs Genesis debate. Many candidates maintained a secure focus on the Hawking/Sachs viewpoints and wrote balanced and thorough answers. Some knew more about theology than science, referring to "God of the Gaps" theology, Paley's Evidences, Karl Popper and Bultmann.

### **Question 6**

This proved to be an unpopular question. Those who did answer it often approached it from a secure knowledge of sociology or psychology. This offered the opportunity to describe a range of methodologies by which means social scientists aspire towards objectivity. Many of the answers showed depth and range, but some candidates found evaluating methodologies harder than describing them as that invariably involved a superficial understanding of scientific method. Many candidates insisted that there was no such thing as objectivity even in rigorously designed and controlled laboratory work. Some candidates cited scientific research sponsored by tobacco companies to support this contention. A common suggestion was that some scientists are prepared to compromise their integrity meaning that scientific method itself is compromised.

### **Question 7**

This was the most popular question, and the least well answered. Many candidates considered this an easy task and set about recycling everyday experiences - typically of music, film and television - into essays describing how technology enabled access to the recording, marketing, distribution, sharing and development of their chosen art form. What was disappointing about many responses was that candidates seemed unable to illustrate their answers with reference to

relevant examples from the selected art forms. In the case of music and the screen, better candidates did refer to genres and artists from those fields, but most other answers did not. To access higher mark levels candidates needed some secure knowledge of technology and their chosen art forms.

Some potentially strong essays on architecture turned into treatises on earthquake proofing Japanese office buildings; some answers on the written word became essays on the mass and social media. Centres are reminded of the dangers of candidates rearranging or even rewriting the rubric of a question in order to provide the opportunity for them to introduce their own knowledge.

What was encouraging and enjoyable about many Section B answers was the sense of candidates' engagement with their chosen topic which often injected their work with an energy and attack which are essential ingredients for success at this high level.

# F734 Culture, Science and Society: Making Connections

## General Comments

Examiners were pleased with the level of candidates' responses to the questions with many essays demonstrating wide knowledge and experience. There was clear evidence of organised thinking and planning revealing a positive interest in developing mature, thoughtful and considered ideas following careful reading and reflection.

For candidates to access the higher mark levels all elements of the question need to be considered. At times the three domains (Culture, Science, and Society) were not fully explored or alternatively too much time was spent on one aspect of the question or one domain at the expense of the others.

The standard of communication continues to be of some concern. Whilst the demise of the apostrophe has long been lamented, the use of paragraphing and the appropriate placing of the full stop are also becoming endangered species. In a few instances illegibility continues to present serious problems in understanding or following the thread of arguments. Essay preparation and writing are essential skills in this examination, and in Higher Education, and centres are advised to ensure that this element of General Studies features prominently in the planning of courses.

## Question 1

The source material related to issues concerning immunisation. The first talked about the introduction of a vaccination for Human Papillomavirus in order to protect teenage girls against cervical cancer. The second presented information about the current National Immunisation Schedule in the UK. Candidates were asked to consider the implications that each of the three domains had on the National Immunisation Schedule and to consider the extent that decisions made by a doctor should outweigh those of a parent.

Cultural issues included discussion about the differing attitudes of religious groups to the issue of vaccinations in general. The more informed candidates were able to identify religious groups to support their thesis; the weaker candidates made only a passing reference with sketchy details. Attitudes to vaccination were often discussed with reference to the MMR vaccine or to the issue of Thalidomide. Whilst the latter is not a vaccine, candidates used it to illustrate attitudes to science and medication in general terms. Candidates used the opportunity that was presented to discuss the tensions between the oath taken by doctors to preserve life and the attitude of parents.

Many candidates used personal experience to illustrate their ideas. Girls might have been perceived to have had an advantage since they may have received the HPV vaccine but there were thoughtful discussions from boys about family experiences possibly as a result of siblings being part of an 'at risk' group such as those with diabetes. Another interesting point that was explored was the position of relatives who, not being UK residents, are unable to access the same quality of medical care.

There was impressive understanding of the science of disease transmission and on most occasions this was used to good effect. Discussion often centred on the trust afforded to 'tried and tested' vaccines as opposed to wariness and concern about relatively new discoveries. Speculation about the changing nature of disease and vaccination was a feature in the higher

level answers. Here there was also opportunity for candidates to demonstrate knowledge about how HPV was transmitted. Discussions about changes to the immunisation regime prompted further exploration of new vaccines that may be introduced in the future for example, a vaccine to prevent prostate cancer.

In the Social Domain, comments often related to a healthier and more productive workforce in the UK. Often this was balanced against the costs of the scheme as a whole. Better quality answers speculated on the balance between preventative costs versus the reactive costs of having to treat an illness for which there was no vaccination or for which the development of a vaccine had been refused by health authorities. This was often supported by examples relating to the treatment of cancer. Only a few candidates mentioned to controversy surrounding the payment for vaccinations by those who were not considered to be 'at risk'.

Weak construction and presentation of an answer leading to a lack of coherence were the key characteristics of essays awarded marks in the lower mark bands. Candidates should be reminded about the importance of good written communication. The organisation of thoughts through clear planning and development of ideas will assist the examiner in making a judgement. The production of a list or with no logical sequence is not commensurate with study at this level.

## Question 2

The source materials for this question were concerned with the eradication of poverty. The first was taken from the UN Millennium goals which identified three targets for 2015. The second related specifically to targets that had been set by the British government in relation to child poverty in the UK. Candidates were asked to consider the implications for each of the domains in relation to the eradication of poverty and to consider the extent to which the goals for the UN and the UK were achievable.

The quality of answers was wide ranging. While a number of weaker candidates were only able to focus on issues relating to the UK, more detailed responses focussed on all aspects of the question and showed an extensive range of knowledge in relation to attempts to eradicate poverty on a worldwide and on a national level. Some responses referred to measures in the UK in relation to the targets set by the UN. In a few cases this was misinterpreted and read as the US resulting in a narrower focus.

Discussion of the Cultural Domain centred on the work of charities in eradicating poverty. There was some scepticism about the long term impact of celebrity-led campaigns like Red Nose Day or Children in Need but generally there was a balanced defence of the motives of leading participants. A common argument was that the recession had made people more cautious. Some suggested the people had become more selfish, about charitable giving. However, the better answers developed this idea into the examination of the health of charitable organisations and their role in Britain.

The Social Domain presented the opportunity for the exploration of economic and political arguments with global references as well as a critical stance towards free-market capitalism. The best answers attempted to provide definitions of poverty and illustrate 'relative' versus 'extreme' using examples. The quality of personal experience ranged from fairly uncritical references of limited context to the meeting of happy but poor people on family holidays overseas. Regular engagement with homeless people through charity work was also an interesting example cited. The issue of poverty in the UK being caused by the influx of immigrants was a popular theme though the better quality essays discussed this issue from an international perspective. Weaker responses simply blamed this group for the poverty in the UK.

Despite a number of engaging responses the scientific domain was often omitted from answers. Popular areas for discussion included Genetically Modified food, 'Golden Rice', issues relating to childbirth, birth and death rates and the general health of people in a number of countries. There was also recognition of the work done by charities such as Water Aid for irrigation, fresh water, and ultimately the recovery of soil productivity.

Personal experience was addressed in a number of ways within responses to this question. Some candidates were able to talk first-hand about the work they have done at home in soup kitchens or shelters with disadvantaged groups in Africa. Examiners were heartened to read of the scope of candidates' experiences of so many diverse and worthwhile projects written with sensitivity and enthusiasm.

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