OCR
RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

Level 2 Award

Thinking and Reasoning Skills

OCR Level 2 Award in Thinking and Reasoning Skills

Report on the Units

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B902/R/10

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Level 2 Award

OCR Level 2 Award in Thinking and Reasoning B902

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Chief Examiner's Report

General Comments

It is a great pleasure to report that the first sitting of the new Level 2 Award in Thinking and Reasoning Skills was extremely successful.

The quality of performance across both units was generally very encouraging, with the majority of candidates using specialist terminology correctly, even those who went on to give answers that attracted only partial performance marks. There was evidence that the vast majority of candidates engaged with the stimulus material and questions with an intelligent relish. There was a variety of creative and thoughtful responses to the more open questions on both units which were a pleasure to mark.

Neither the question rubric nor timing appeared to be an issue, as across both units there were few instances of candidates attempting the wrong task or of leaving questions blank or incomplete. The vast majority of candidates attempted all questions and tackled the questions with a focus that brought about very pleasing performance. In both units, where candidates were given greater freedom to evidence a range of skills with a larger mark tariff, differentiation was clearly achieved. The strongest responses provided enthusiastic, focused answers which demonstrated higher level skills, whilst weaker responses did enough to attract partial performance marks.

The examination appears to have been pitched at an appropriate level. Overall, candidates were able to score marks appropriate to their ability and at the same time more able candidates were stretched.

Where candidates were clearly familiar with the pre-release material they were able to produce focused, developed responses to a very high level indeed. However it is clear that some centres did not follow the recommendation that a minimum of six guided learning hours be allocated prior to the examination to working carefully through the pre-released materials with candidates. It is essential to do this, as candidates will not have time in the examination to search through these documents for the material necessary to support their answers. Furthermore it is clearly helpful to have reflected critically upon that material in advance of the examination. Centres which failed to do this unfortunately disadvantaged their candidates on Unit B902. Such centres are therefore strongly recommended to make use of the scheme of work for the pre-release support materials, which is available to all on line.

B901

General Comments

The examination appears to have been set at an appropriate level. The paper successfully assessed the full range of reasoning and problem solving skills and nearly all candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allowed. Overall candidates were able to score marks appropriate to their ability and at the same time more able candidates were stretched. There was a full spread of marks between 6 and 56 marks, with the majority of candidates accessing marks in the range 26 to 52 marks.

Generally Section A was well done with the majority of candidates demonstrating strong problem solving skills (especially in Q5, on processing information to draw out conclusions). Candidates displayed good skills of analysis and evaluation in response to short stimulus material.

Section B, which required more extended answers and more creative thinking in terms of generating and explaining questions, successfully differentiated between candidates. Most candidates were able to respond to these more open questions at a level appropriate to their ability but more able candidates were appropriately challenged and stretched as demonstrated by the wider spread of marks awarded for this section.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1a: Most candidates were able to identify the basic components in simple arguments though not all successfully identified the main conclusion.

Question 1b: This question was generally well done but discriminated successfully between stronger and weaker candidates. Very weak answers could not recognise the distinction between joint and independent reasons and only the stronger answers explained this distinction clearly and accurately in candidates' own words.

Question 2: Generally this question was well done. Poorly prepared candidates clearly did not know the names of the basic flaws and either put down a random label or offered an explanation in place of a name. Explanations were usually accurate; the best answers gave an explanation which was specific to the actual case.

Question 3a: Nearly all candidates answered this question successfully. A few lost marks by identifying patterns which did not associate personal details: eg some candidates pointed out that the names in the first column were in alphabetical order. Others lost marks through careless over generalisation e.g. all boys have a language as their favourite subject/all boys have siblings.

Question 3b: Generally most candidates were able to extrapolate from the information in Table 1 to complete Table 2 successfully.

Question 3c: This produced a range of intelligent answers and discriminated between candidates. Strong answers clearly recognised the link between languages and siblings and further recognised that German as a new language may not necessarily conform to that pattern. Other good answers pointed out that the association established in Table 1 was not necessarily universal or not necessarily causal. Weaker answers struggled to explain why the link might not hold in this case and these candidates usually left this part of the question unanswered.

Question 3d: A significant minority of candidates failed to note the key point, that the two subjects were done in the wrong order (Maths before TRS) so that there could not be a causal link between them. Ingenious, – but in the context irrelevant - explanations focusing on the distractions posed by siblings (eg girls do well because they don't have siblings to stop them studying) were not judged creditworthy.

Question 3e: Most candidates scored full marks by making the obvious points about sample size and the unrepresentative nature of subjects simply and clearly. Other intelligent answers were also credited; e.g. some candidates pointed out that it was consistent with the information provided that boys outperformed girls by achieving A* in Maths GCSE not just an A.

Question 4a: Many candidates were able to identify the factor which was both necessary and sufficient.

Question 4b: However very few candidates were able to explain clearly and simply <u>why</u> the factor was both necessary and sufficient. Centres need to focus on this so that an implicit understanding of the concept is made explicit. Candidates at this level should be capable of articulating that something is necessary because you have to have it and is sufficient because it is enough on its own. The explanations were often omitted altogether or in some cases confused.

Question 4c: The ability to apply the concepts of necessary and sufficient was more widespread than the ability to explain them. Many candidates, but by no means all, scored full marks on this question.

Question 5: This question was very well done, with a very high number of candidates scoring full marks.

Section B

Question 6a: This question differentiated well between candidates. The weakest responses failed to generate questions which were relevant to evaluation of the photograph as evidence and tended to make irrelevant references to Document B. Stronger candidates did identify questions, about the provenance or content of the photograph, which were clearly relevant to its status as evidence for the Loch Ness Monster. The strongest responses offered explanations which typically contained developed reasoning, often signalled by the use of language such as "therefore", "since", "because" etc.

Question 6b: Most but not all candidates successfully identified claims which served as evidence in the witness statement of Eileen Campbell. Some candidates lost marks through careless paraphrases which omitted central elements in the evidence eg omitting the fact that Nessie is "*often*" described as being like a dinosaur or serpent. The evaluation of the evidence differentiated between candidates. The weakest responses failed to understand that this required an explanation as to why the evidence could be judged strong or weak, and in some cases simply repeated the initial claim in their own words. The strongest answers not only used vocabulary such as "corroboration" but also explained the term in context and offered nuanced judgements about the significance of the number of witnesses, their possible interdependence and general reliability.

Question 6c: Generally this question was well done and differentiated across the ability range. Nearly all candidates succeeded in identifying an alternative explanation. In the case of the weakest responses the alternative explanation tended to be implausible, not rooted in the Document and underdeveloped. For example, some candidates offered as the alternative explanation that what David Bruce saw was a robot built either by himself or other hoaxers, or an actual dinosaur other than Nessie.

Better responses supported their explanation with direct quotations from Document B offering a developed and more plausible explanation in terms of the dog growling and chasing sticks in the water. In addition to this the best answers used a range of credibility criteria (ability to see; vested interest; corroboration; contradiction) in order to demonstrate that their explanation was more credible than the views of David Bruce. Only the very best answers provided a full and comprehensive response which was developed in depth and detail.

Question 7a: Nearly all candidates succeeded in identifying one question relevant to any decision about how to treat the Yeti.

Question 7b: Most candidates explained the relevance and significance of their question. Many more simple answers focused on the sociability of Yeti and the impact of separating them from their group, and on the potential dangers to humans of capturing these creatures. But some very sophisticated responses were also given, in terms of rationality; self consciousness; emotional and moral development and links were made between possessing these attributes and qualifying for natural rights.

Question 7c: A full range of answers was offered in response to this question. The weakest responses, relatively few in number, failed to produce an argument and no conclusion was either stated or even clearly implied. Some candidates did offer an argument with reasons and conclusion but the conclusion actually contradicted the one proposed to the candidate in the question e.g. they argued Yeti should be kept in zoos. These candidates were unable to access high marks. Similarly other candidates paraphrased the conclusion with varying degrees of accuracy and chose to argue for that, rather than for the precise conclusion proposed to them. Not many candidates who did this accessed the highest marks.

Those candidates who did access the highest marks on this question provided developed reasons which were adequate to the right conclusion. Centres will need to advise candidates that where the conclusion is already given they are to develop an argument in support of that precise conclusion and not simply come with an argument on that topic with a wholly different conclusion.

B902

General Comments

In the first year of this pilot qualification the examination appears to have been set at an appropriate level. The most able candidates were stretched and proved able to respond positively to the challenges which the paper set them. A good proportion of candidates were able to gain marks of 48 and above. There was evidence to suggest, however, that a number of candidates, and whole centres in some cases, had not been well prepared for this examination. Consequently a disappointingly large number of candidates received fewer than 24 marks.

Unit 2 is a case study and is based upon a pack of pre-released materials which are made available well in advance of the examination date. As indicated in the sample scheme of work published on the OCR website, a period of time should be set aside at the end of the course to study the pre-released pack in lessons. Teachers should try, where possible, to bring out the main issues raised by the documents in the pack. For the specific case study in this paper there were opportunities for role-plays and debates, as well as reading through, studying and evaluating the documents against the skills contained within the specification. The most successful centres showed evidence of this, particularly in Section B where previous thinking around the issue of Eliza Fenning's guilt or innocence was clearly evident.

There was little evidence of candidates running out of time on this examination, although a significant minority failed to attempt one or more questions spread through the paper. This emphasises another important point about the pre-release material - that the candidates need to have a reasonable familiarity with the documents in order to avoid the need for lengthy reading in an examination which only lasts sixty minutes. This familiarity was particularly noticeable in those candidates who produced strong answers to question 12, making effective use of the evidence contained within the documents.

The quality of written communication was generally good and was not a factor in limiting candidates' access to the marks available.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1:
(a) Most candidates scored well.
(b) A significant number of candidates got this question wrong, despite the presence of the indicator word 'Although' to help identify the counter argument.

Question 2:
(a) Many candidates correctly identified all three examples of flaws here, but a significant minority seemed to be guessing.
(b) An explanation of the weakness was required here, so reference was needed to confusing cause and correlation or to examples of alternative factors which could have caused the rise in the murder rate. Few candidates gained both marks for this question.

Question 3:
Most candidates gained at least one mark for this question, but the second was only gained by those who could justify their answer with reference to something which Alice had said in her dialogue with Pawel.

Question 4:
This was a good discriminator, with many candidates getting all ten marks but again a significant minority who seemed to be guessing at random.

Question 5:
(a) Most candidates were able to identify the motive and gained one mark, but an explanation for 2 marks required reference to Eliza's desire for revenge as a consequence.
(b) Another good discriminator, with the best candidates using quotations or paraphrases from the documents to support their explanations.

Question 6:
Most candidates answered this question successfully, though a few gave answers which would have supported Eliza's guilt rather than her innocence.

Question 7:
Again, this was generally answered well by most candidates. It was important here to identify evidence which related specifically to Eliza.

Question 8:
Another good discriminator, with only the better candidates able to produce a developed explanation to gain two marks.

Question 9:
(a) Many candidates failed to identify this as a question about analogies.
(b) Perhaps as a consequence of producing an incorrect answer to part (a), a surprising number were unable to successfully identify differences and a similarity.
(c) The most successful answers here expanded on differences identified in part (b) as an explanation for agreeing with Nyati.

Section B

Question 10:
This question discriminated well. Stronger responses used the documents and candidates' own reasoning skills to produce developed explanations, but weaker responses struggled with the concept of a counter-claim. A significant minority failed to attempt this question.

Question 11:
Most candidates scored well with significant numbers getting all three marks.

Question 12:
This question was expected to be a key discriminator and this did prove to be the case. Stronger responses developed well reasoned arguments and reached level 3 (7-9 marks) by producing a range of reasons supporting Eliza's innocence, well supported by evidence and examples taken from the documents. Large numbers of candidates reached level 2 (4-6 marks), with their answers characterised by a more limited range of reasons and less clarity in their reasoning. Weaker arguments often focused on alternative candidates for the perpetrator of the poisoning, being heavily reliant upon assumptions and ignoring the lack of evidence to support deliberate poisoning at all. A small minority produced an argument supporting Eliza's guilt.

Question 13:
Another question which discriminated well due to the requirement for a developed explanation. Again, a significant minority failed to attempt either part.