

Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE A2 H452

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H052

Examiners' Reports

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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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Chief Examiner Report

This session candidates evidenced a full range of Critical Thinking skills at all levels with very few instances of no response. Whatever their ability, candidates were making good if not spirited efforts to answer the questions. There appeared to be greater confidence in wielding the skills required and candidates were prepared to tackle new styles of questions with gusto.

For centres looking for general advice as to how candidates can improve their general performance on the papers, the following five pointers were identified this session as pertinent to all four units:

- **Expected the unexpected**
Questions change slightly over time and those candidates who set out to answer the question asked tend to target the marks better than those who try to bend pre-rehearsed formulae to the question.
- **Take heed of the precise requirements of the question**
Those candidates who target their answers to the questions, by looking at the correct document or paragraph or source and referring accurately to the details of the claims give themselves a sporting chance of being credited assessment marks. There are no error carried forward marks for accurate assessments of the wrong piece of text.
- **Target the answer to the space/time available**
From January 2012 the A2 units as well as the AS units, will have a question and answer booklet. At AS, the spaces given within these booklets are designed to indicate roughly the length of answer that is expected. Those who spend time going much beyond these spaces may jeopardise finishing the last question, thus risking more than they could gain by more extensive answers to earlier questions. At A2, some F503 candidates thoroughly answer the penultimate question at the expense of the final question. A2 candidates should be given guidance on how much time to spend on each question in order to target the number of marks available
- **Develop assessments**
The number of marks available is also a good guide as to what is required. An assessment that attracts 3 marks will need to be developed with explanation, beyond a bald statement of the weakness. The mark schemes give detailed guidance as to what a 3 mark question requires and how this compares with 2 or 1 partial performance marks.
- **Choose carefully what to assess**
Some assessments are more easily developed than others. So, for questions where there is a choice, selecting the most productive assessments is important. Candidates will benefit from practising this skill. Again the mark schemes can be used as a guide.

F501 Introduction to Critical Thinking

General comments

This session evidenced a wide range of performance, with nuanced and perceptive answers in the 60+ mark range; whilst those between 30 and 40 picked up partial performance marks across a number of questions. Candidates in all mark ranges performed evenly over both sections of the paper, with strongest performance identifying the conclusion in Q1 (a), evidence in 1 (c) and inconsistency in 8 (a). Common errors were found in Q1 (b) identifying reason; Q2 (b) justifying the argument element and Q3 (a) explaining representation. Omissions were extremely rare and confined to Q2 and Q8 (b). Timing strategies appeared to be well employed; the later questions being as developed as those preceding them.

Specialist terms were widely used; adeptly in strong answers and with a correct basic understanding in others. Some needed to transfer the spellings correctly from the resource booklet to avoid errors such as *'carbon food print'* and *'air frightened food.'* Strong answers gave keen attention to the detail of the documents and the exact nature of the claims, enabling precisely focused answers. This was especially evident in the longer question where many candidates grasped the opportunity to engage enthusiastically with the issues; pinpointing problems and solutions and weaving these into a convincing judgement. Others grasped the general issues, gaining partial performance marks for correct assessments that needed further development.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

- 1 Most candidates recognised that this is a technical question requiring precise reference to the text, without paraphrase, addition or omission.
- 1 (a) This was answered well, the strongest recognising that the *'The Archbishop of Canterbury has suggested that'* should not be included in his claim and that *'from thousands of new allotments'* was an essential part of his claim.
- 1 (b) Candidates found this challenging. Most identified the reason correctly and the strongest answers went on to discount the example 'peas from Kenya', preceded by the indicator word 'like' to be able to gain full marks.
- 1 (c) This was well identified by most. Answers that focused upon the 1% of food imported into the UK, needed to have also included its 11% contribution to CO₂ emissions to capture the significance of the evidence.
- 1 (d) Many candidates correctly identified at least one counter assertion, including the vital words *'in Africa'*. Other answers needed to have recognised the argument indicator *'because'* to have discounted the counter conclusion.
- 2 (a) Many correctly identified the argument element as an example. Other answers such as 'appeal to pity', demonstrated the need to be clear about what is an argument element and which of these are tested in Unit 1.

- 2 (b) A minority correctly referred to '*an instance*' and fewer to the role of '*illustrating*'. More picked up partial performance marks for recognising that this element lent support to the reasoning. Those who gained 0 marks simply repeated '*example*' in connection with waiting lists as their explanation.
- 3 Candidates found it easier to explain why the evidence might not be representative, picking up on the narrowness of its remit, than to explain why it might be representative. Answers that gained partial performance gave a bald statement, needing to develop the impact upon possible representation, eg '*The survey only covered England and Wales, not Scotland*' needed '*so it is not representative of food wasted in the whole of the UK*' to gain both marks. A common error was to confuse reliability with representation.
- 4 Whilst few gained 3 marks for an accurate statement, many more accessed two partial performance marks for an overdrawn assumption, such as '*allotment growers will not buy any food from the supermarkets.*' Answers needed to have grasped that allotments had a limited remit to '*help people move away...*'.
- 5 The majority of answers were correctly targeted to allotment growing rather than to the generalities of growing food in general, most focusing upon distance and lack of security. A sizable number of these answers continued their reasoning with an '*and*' or a '*so*', thus gaining 1 partial performance mark.
- 6 This question discriminated well, with candidates identifying both strengths and weakness, often arguing in a spirited manner. The strongest answers homed in on the word '*best*' arguing that the reasoning supported a '*better*' way but that there were other equally '*better ways*', making the reasoning inadequate to demonstrate the ultimate superiority of allotment-grown food. Answers that gained 2 marks usually discussed the relevancy of the reasoning without assessing the support; whilst those that simply quoted or described the reasoning were able to gain 1 mark.

Section B

- 7 The choice of credibility criterion often impacted upon the marks gained, with the strongest answers assessing Kent District Council's expertise or vested interest to maintain its reputation as the '*Garden of England*'. Where answers gained one partial performance mark for the correct understanding of the credibility criterion, this was usually where reputation was claimed without any justification. Answers gaining 0 marks tended to use bias instead of vested interest when talking about a gain or a loss. Very few answers were limited to 1 mark for assessing a source, WRAP, instead of assessing the document itself.
- 8 Most candidates correctly identified the inconsistency with precision in (a); the strongest giving an explanation for this in (b), with a minority referring to motive.
- 9 The majority gave correct claims and where they were incorrect it was because answers quoted the author's comments such as '*Flying food from Kenya...*' or '*This aim to create 2,012 new allotments...*' rather than those of the sources. This impacted on the number of marks that could be credited in parts (ii) and (iii) of the question. The strongest answers geared their assessment to the claim that they had chosen, making the choice of claim important, as it was easier when assessing expertise to refer back to Boycott's claim about '*growing healthy food*' than it was to '*a good deal of green spaces*'. Assessments of Boycott tended to be more fully developed than those of the Africa Research Institute, where answers had to work harder to justify the criteria other than the most obvious of expertise. The strongest answers avoided the generalisations

that a person has a good reputation just because they are a member of the government, or a bad one just because they have been a newspaper editor.

- 10** This question was a good discriminator of both the ability to compare the quality of claims and to use these assessments to reach a judgement. Level 3 answers strongly assessed the credibility of more than one person on the sides required by the question, going on to adeptly compare the plausibility of solutions and usually favouring the reduction of waste as having a more immediate effect. Level 2 answers tended to focus upon an unrequired area, either assessing the credibility of sources associated with reducing waste or discussing the plausibility of reducing air freight. Many also imagined that Boris Johnson had made statements about allotments and assessed his credibility. Level 1 answers tended to discuss plausibility without referring to the text or to briefly assess the credibility of one person rather than a side. Some candidates were answering this question as if it were framed for the previous specification.

Arguments about plausibility were often insightful, balancing a number of complex issues. The plausibility of immediately extending the use of allotments was discussed in terms the time, inclination, agricultural skill, and financial input necessary for the successful cultivation of food on a sufficiently wide scale given the current shortage of allotment space across the UK. Others argued that the preparation of land for allotments and travelling to and from them would contribute to UK CO₂ emissions, undermining the benefit of their introduction. The plausibility of plans to reduce food wastage having a more immediate impact was assessed in terms of the cost-saving incentive and the relative straightforwardness of a decision to buy less. The contribution to CO₂ emissions from landfill sites as opposed to that from air-freighted food; as well as the question whether a reduction in food wastage would lead to a reduction in air-freighted food were also considered. Other interesting approaches were suggestions of ways to use left over yoghurt and to increase the shelf life of perishable goods. These answers often needed to be related more directly to the plausibility of getting people to reduce their waste to be able to be credited.

F502 Assessing and Developing Argument

General comments

There was clear evidence that candidates had enough time to complete the paper. Although many candidates continued their answers on the additional pages, in most of cases this extra writing did not lead to more marks, the answer spaces being sufficient to gain full credit. However, candidates who took time to plan their further arguments, using the additional pages for that purpose, did in general produce higher quality arguments. It is recommended that centres encourage candidates to plan their further arguments, considering what their reasons are and what their structure will be, before writing their arguments in full in the answer spaces provided.

Candidates continue to find the evaluation questions on section B the most demanding, whether it is of reasoning, evidence or, in the case of Q20, analogies. Many candidates describe what the author is doing, perhaps correctly naming a flaw type, rather than evaluating the effect of the flaw on the reasoning. As well as practising the identification of flaws, candidates need to practise explaining the negative impact of the flaw on the reasoning *in context and with relevance to the question posed*.

Some candidates invented evidence in their further arguments. When invented evidence is used instead of reasons, it can reduce the quality of the candidate's argument. This is particularly the case when the evidence is extreme or implausible. The same is true for examples. It is far better that candidates spend their time writing plausible, developed reasons, or developing their reasons through the use of intermediate conclusions, rather than inventing evidence or examples to support a more limited argument.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

On questions 1, 4, 6 and 8 of the multiple choice questions, candidates struggled to decide whether a statement was an intermediate conclusion or a main conclusion. It is recommended that centres focus on teaching candidates how to tell them apart. One useful test, as explained in the recommended textbook, is whether A supports B or B supports A.

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

- 1 The majority of candidates answered B, perhaps because it is the last sentence. It is certainly a conclusion but it supports A. A cannot be used to support B. It is perhaps worth candidates considering what the main point or purpose of the passage is – something that might also point them towards A.
- 2 The majority of candidates went for D. Although *because* is an argument indicator word for reasons, that is not enough for something to be a reason. The statement is explaining why *something is the case* not *why something should be the case*.
- 3 The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

- 4** Candidates went for each of the options, but this question discriminated well. A significant number went for A, but the statement is an unsupported claim, so acts as a reason.
- 5** As is often the case in flaws questions, there was an equal spread amongst each of the wrong answers, A, B and C. Looking carefully at the mark scheme rationale for flaws questions on past papers will be instructive for candidates.
- 6** Many candidates went for C, when it can only give support for A and it does not work the other way around. Hence C must be the intermediate conclusion.
- 7** This was one of the more challenging questions on this section, with many candidates incorrectly choosing C.
- 8** This was also a challenging question with a significant number of candidates opting for the reason (D) or the main conclusion (A). Although subtle, only C is supported by something (D and evidence) and also supports a further statement (A).
- 11** This was a new type of question, which discriminated well. A significant number of candidates went for options A and B.
- 12** The majority of candidates answered this question correctly. A minority went for A or B, which are not needed for the conclusion to follow, particularly in the over-specific form they each have.
- 15** Like question 5, this was a flaws question with an equal spread amongst each of the wrong answers, implying that many candidates either do not know the difference between flaw types, or find recognising and then matching to the correct name of a flaw a difficult exercise.

Sections B and C

- 16** The vast majority of candidates correctly selected the section of text from the passage and wrote it down verbatim, rather than paraphrasing it. There is still a need to take care with other material embedded however, as shown in Q16 (c).
- 16 (a)** The majority of candidates answered this question correctly, although fewer than in previous sessions for this question. More candidates than usual were tempted by other claims in the passage, the most common being the end of paragraph 3: "we must cut down on their time spent on computers".
- Candidates who did get 16 (a) incorrect often then went on to lose marks for 16 (c). In line with the advice on the multiple choice questions, it is advised that centres help candidates to practise swapping the order around for intermediate and main conclusions, to help decide which supports, and which is supported.
- 16 (b)** The vast majority chose the correct section of text, although a number then continued it through to the second sentence with the "Despite any such gain..." which then lost credit.

- 16 (c)** Candidates found this more challenging than in the past. Many lost marks in the following ways:
- Option E on the mark scheme – this was very popular and centres are advised to help candidates differentiate between evidence supporting a reason, and reasons supporting an intermediate conclusion. The difference can sometimes be subtle, but here it was clear.
 - The statement “we must cut down on their time spent on computers”, which was part of option E – this is not an intermediate conclusion, as the text before it is a necessary part of the sentence to act as a reason, not a separate reason supporting this as a claim.
 - “Young people have not got the same control as adults” – this was another popular answer, but it gives support to a claim, rather than being supported.
 - Option A on the mark scheme, but including the preface “It is extremely popular but” – candidates need to consider all parts of a sentence carefully and determine if it contains anything additional to the argument element they have been asked to identify.
 - Option D on the mark scheme – where the majority of candidates included the embedded reason about practising crucial skills.

When there are a number of options in the passage for a requested argument element, as in Q16 (c), it is sensible for candidates to consider all the options and then decide which they feel most confident about, rather than writing down the first two that they identify and moving on.

- 17** The question asked for an alternative explanation for the *increase* in the number of homes with internet access. Candidates needed to give an explanation of the increase over time, rather than just an advantage of the internet without showing why access has increased.
- 18** This question was a challenging one for most candidates (see recommendation on teaching flaws in the general comments above).
- The most common answer was the false cause flaw, although answers often lacked a clear statement that other factors could have caused the weight increase *instead* of time spent on computers (many candidates said other factors could *contribute* but this would not weaken the argument).
 - Candidates who went for one of the two areas of conflation generally scored well.
 - A significant minority attacked the evidence because of its lack of credibility – this is not an evaluation of the use of the evidence in the reasoning and therefore it was not credited.
 - There were examples of significant confusion over terminology, where flaws were named but the names did not match the explanations given. Although there was no mark *per se* for the names, candidates who did this often gave a confused answer which did not get full credit.
- 19** More candidates achieved full marks on this question than in the past, indicating a better understanding of principles. A significant minority seemed unsure what they had to do, or perhaps did not know what a principle was. A number of candidates wrote a principle related to how parents should control their children on the internet – this was not credited as it did not *support* paragraph 4, but could be *supported* by paragraph 4, a subtle but important distinction in answering the question.

20 (a) This proved a challenging question which differentiated well. The best answers precisely and separately stated the two items being compared in the analogy. Some candidates lost marks for a lack of precision, for example comparing sweetshop and computer use (leaving out the “internet access”) or stating that the children were being allowed internet access *without control* (this is not stated in the analogy – whether being in their bedroom is the same as being without control is a question for evaluation, not for the precise identification of the analogy). Some candidates gave a brief statement of the analogy and then moved onto evaluation in part (a), which was not what the question asked. This lost marks if the statement of identification lacked the required precision while giving extra information and/or evaluation not (yet) asked for.

20 (b) This was a challenging question, which again differentiated well. Many candidates scored 2 marks for making a good comparative point, either a strength or a weakness, but they needed to go on to justify it or to make a judgement *in context* (ie not just a bland statement of “so they are different” or “so the analogy is strong”).

A number of candidates focussed on the obesity issue from the earlier paragraphs, considering that sweet-eating would make you obese in the same way as browsing on the internet would. This was not given credit.

21 This was a challenging question which was generally well answered by candidates. Common errors were to make too strong an assumption, for example “same skills as at A-level” or “Law course requires essay-writing” or to be too vague about the skills required, such as “Law course requires particular skills”.

22 The vast majority correctly recognised the appeal although a number of candidates stated the name with imprecision using supposed synonyms rather than the name “appeal to popularity” given in the specification. In part (b), candidates struggled to explain why the support was lacking, many merely giving a narrative on what the author was saying or describing what the appeal to popularity was, not explaining why it did not give good support.

23 This was a well answered question. Many candidates could think of two reasons and these were rarely repetitious, although a significant number of the reasons given required assumptions in order to support the given claim. Candidates would be advised to take a moment to consider several reasons and to select the ones that best support the claim without requiring major assumptions.

24 The majority of candidates came up with a relevant example and many of these did show clearly a risk that, if taken away, would lead to a worse risk in future. A small number gave an explanation along the lines that stopping an action would cause teenagers to be more rebellious and do it anyway, which was reasoning in a different way than *Dr_Net* and needed to be expressed as an example to gain credit.

25/26 As noted in the general comments above, candidates are advised to plan their answers, first considering what reasons they could use, then deciding which ones they will use, and then how they might develop these using intermediate conclusions to support their main conclusion. A few minutes of thought before committing to paper is bound to increase the quality of the argument. In particular, the use of invented evidence or examples in place of reasoning or development often let candidates down.

Where candidates include counter-assertions or counter-arguments, they need to rebut them, otherwise the counters do not have a function in their argument. Some candidates started with a formulaic introduction of “Some people say X” and then went into their further argument without ever specifically addressing the point made in the counter-assertion. Counter-arguments need to be rebutted in order to gain credit.

- 25** This was generally well answered, although many candidates stuck rigidly to the advantages of the internet, sometimes to the family as a whole, rather than thinking of other factors important in whether or not the pupils should be given a laptop.
- 26** The better arguments discussed both sport and ICT, and these often then led to a good use of intermediate conclusions in the argument. Arguments that addressed one aspect only tended to be narrow and did not fully address the claim regarding sport “rather than” ICT.

F503 Ethical Reasoning & Decision-making

General comments

The subject seemed to engage candidates' interest fairly well. Some, having found it more difficult to absorb the information given in Document 1, imagined that convicted 10-year-olds were sent to an adult prison and/or that no action of any kind was taken against children below the age of criminal responsibility who committed crimes. The most popular choice for Q3 and Q4 was to keep the age of criminal responsibility at 10.

There was little evidence of candidates running out of time. As last session, the handwriting in a few scripts was so bad that, despite spending two or three times the usual amount of time on each, examiners could not be sure that they had interpreted the candidates' intentions correctly.

Comments on individual questions

- 1 Because this question was quite open-ended, it prompted a wide range of answers, of varying degrees of relevance. The most popular good answers were that respondents might have been lying (a motive needed to be suggested in order to gain 3 marks) and that certain high-offending groups were omitted from the statistics (to gain 3 marks, candidates needed to explain that this had caused the amount of law-breaking to be under-stated). As on previous occasions, quite a lot of candidates criticised the statistics for being out of date, which was judged to be a trivial point and given 1 mark; however, the very few candidates who linked the date with the change in policy noted in Document 1 were given 2 marks. Positive evaluations of credibility were also considered trivial, since they did not say much about why the statistics might be useful in relation to the stated issue. Answers which criticised the statistics for not giving different information were not credited, on the basis that the question asked candidates to evaluate the information which had been given, not what had not.
- 2 Many candidates achieved 5 marks out of 6 on this question, because they knew the salient defining features of a dilemma and correctly identified the problems which would be caused by either raising or not raising the age of criminal responsibility. A very few candidates achieved 6 marks, by showing that this is strictly not a dilemma, because the boundary for criminal responsibility could be set at any of several possible ages and any specific proposal would be open to the possibility of compromise. Alternatively it was possible to achieve full marks by saying that it was a dilemma and showing full understanding of what a dilemma is. A significant minority of candidates, who did not know what a dilemma was, scored 0 or 1.
- 3 Many candidates now realize that answers to this question need to be succinct, because only 12 marks are allocated to it. Some still unwisely developed their answers at greater length. A few wrote more for Q3 than for Q4, even though the latter carries three times as many marks.

A good number of candidates recognized the importance of identifying ambiguity in the application of criteria and of using intermediate conclusions to strengthen the structure of their answers.

Candidates who chose to evaluate the choice of keeping the age at its current level created a particular difficulty for themselves in that they were unable to draw comparisons with the present state of affairs. Some of them drew such comparisons anyway, focusing on the issue rather than a particular choice, which reduced their marks.

Nearly all candidates took the advice of the examiners by choosing public safety as one of their criteria, and this was the best part of many answers. Most candidates correctly stated that raising the age of criminal responsibility would endanger public safety. A few pointed out that youngsters who might get into trouble are members of the public, and their safety is therefore relevant to this criterion.

The next most popular criterion was cost or effect on the economy. This was generally done quite well. Some candidates over-estimated the savings which could be achieved by not prosecuting children for their misdeeds. Child welfare was another valid criterion which some candidates used well.

Public opinion was a fairly popular criterion, but as on some other occasions these answers tended to be speculative and/or to repeat material from a previous answer, such as claiming that a policy would satisfy the criterion of public opinion because it would improve public safety.

Although effectiveness is in principle a valid criterion, candidates who used it tended to interpret it as effectiveness in reducing crime, and to repeat their answers on public safety.

Candidates from several centres chose "ethics" or "morality" as a criterion. This is inadvisable, not only because of the danger of duplication between questions 3 and 4, but because it is a very broad criterion. However, it was possible to give some credit to most of these answers by treating them as the equivalent of "justice" or "fairness" etc.

- 4 Most candidates succeeded in identifying a clear choice, which they then defended. Others chose something quite vague, like raising the age of criminal responsibility without specifying to what it should be raised. Several candidates used simple contradictions as alternatives (eg raising the age as the alternative to keeping it at its present level), which did not enable them to compare two or more choices, because the arguments against one simply constituted arguments in favour of the other.

Candidates from some centres still tackled the question without reference to principles, even though – as always – the question made it quite clear that the use of principles was fundamental to this exercise. Some candidates produced answers that would have been good outside the context of the specific expectations of this unit.

This was quite a difficult topic to discuss by reference to standard principles and ethical theories. Candidates found it fairly easy to argue that crime should be punished, but it was much harder to bridge the gap between that claim and justifying a particular age at which liability to such punishment should begin. Some candidates used ethical principles or theories to explain why people should not commit crime instead of focusing on the issue of the age at which they should become liable to punishment.

Simple Consequentialism or Utilitarianism was – as always – a popular choice for a principle. A few candidates used both and alleged spurious differences between them. Most of the consequentialist reflections were persuasive as far as they went, although there was a tendency to consider only the number of people involved and not the intensity or duration (etc) of their pain or pleasure.

The human rights which were claimed in relation to this issue included the right to private property and to safety, but few candidates if any explored the implications of the right to a fair trial, which could have been a fruitful approach.

Quite a lot of candidates made use of the first version of Kant's Categorical Imperative (the Principle of Universality) to justify punishing all crime, but they then had difficulty in explaining why there should be any age limit at all. A very few candidates solved this problem by focusing on rationality as the criterion for membership of the moral community, which is probably how Kant himself would have tackled this question. Few candidates made use of the second version of the Categorical Imperative, although it could have been quite useful.

The Social Contract was another good choice for justifying the duty of the State to punish crime, but again it was not easy to move from that duty to a particular age of criminal responsibility.

Paternalism was quite a popular choice, although not many candidates succeeded in applying it persuasively to the question.

Some candidates drew on the Catholic tradition of Moral Theology for part of their answers. One candidate correctly identified and made good use of tutorism (the principle that in case of doubt, one should take the safest option). Some quite trivial religious arguments based on the Ten Commandments relied on huge and questionable assumptions.

A lot of candidates made use of Document 2 to support a proposal to raise the age of criminal responsibility, and the best answers recognised the weaknesses in the argument and used them as a reason for rejecting that choice. Several candidates wrongly attributed the document to the United Nations and claimed that it therefore had good credibility.

Many candidates made relevant use of Document 3 in their answers to Q4. Most of them used it uncritically to support their claim that 9-year-olds know the difference between right and wrong and should be held accountable for their misdeeds. Other candidates strengthened their argument by pointing out that the source of the anecdote had good credibility (expertise and ability to see), while more sophisticated answers acknowledged the dangers of generalising from a single case. A few recognized that the boy's bravado does not actually prove that he understands the significance of law-breaking.

Document 4 was less useful, largely because it did not give any basis for comparison between the current age of criminal responsibility and any alternative. A few candidates were able to make valid use of the statistics. Other claims were too speculative.

F504 Critical Reasoning

General comments

Candidates – both male and female – responded with enthusiasm and interest to the topic of space exploration and the ideas about human limits. The paper discriminated well between candidates.

Some candidates had clearly been very thoroughly prepared for questions in exactly the same style as last year and a minority did not manage to adapt to the difference in style of questions 2 and 3.

Comments on individual questions

- 1 (a) The majority of candidates were able to identify the portion of text as setting the scene but only a few gained the function mark. Most simply gave an explanation of scene setting or background which amounted to the same thing in other words.
 - (b) Many of the candidates were aware that there was a counter element to the portion of text quoted. Very few said that it was an explanation but many were able to articulate some creditworthy relationship to the role of governments in footing the bill for space exploration.
 - (c) Many candidates correctly identified this as a reason. A very common error was to say that it was an intermediate conclusion. Of those that gave either of these two answers, most gained credit for accurately identifying that its function was to support the claim that 'space exploration is an investment that improves the quality of our lives'.
- 2 This question was a good discriminator. The best answers showed a very good understanding of the extent to which Krauss is against sending humans into space and were able to justify this effectively by accurate reference to the text. There were others that showed a clear understanding but were less able to select the key parts of the text or had a tendency to paraphrase. A significant number did select key parts of the text but then came to a judgement that Krauss was definitely against sending humans into space, despite, in many cases, having cited parts which showed that he wasn't entirely against it. A few simply gave an analysis of the argument without any attempt to address the question asked while others hedged their bets and gave a detailed analysis as part of an answer to the question.
 - 3 This question also provided a good level of discrimination. The best answers spotted that Document 2 was not intended to counter Document 1 or picked up that Document 1 referred to human space exploration while Document 2 referred to space exploration in general. Most of the answers listed points that countered each other and agreed with each other, although some of the statements that were claimed to be counters were only very tangentially linked, if at all. Some of the best answers justified a correct conclusion by explaining how points that could be seen to counter did not in fact do so. Many of the weaker answers comprised irrelevant evaluation, though a few demonstrated some very good evaluation which strongly supported a judgement that Document 2 did not effectively counter Document 1. One of the common problems was to focus exclusively on the cost factor while another was to come to a judgement about the effectiveness of the counter which did not agree with the points they had raised. A number of candidates threw critical thinking terms at their answer with little understanding, at the expense of thinking clearly and simply for themselves.

- 4 The subject for this argument was one which clearly engaged the vast majority of candidates and the balance of challenge and support was roughly even. Some candidates chose to argue about why we should push the limits rather than whether there should be limits (often in the same paragraph as saying there are no limits), while others seemed to treat limits as if they were the equivalent of a ban, with statements like “if there are limits there will be no progress”. Very few entered into the question where the limits should be set or by whom. Candidates from some centres relied too heavily on spouting ethical principles and this militated against the sort of chains of reasoning and logical connection that attracted the most credit. Many candidates simply made a string of assertions, “we should do x, y or z” without giving any justification. Nevertheless, there were some very good answers; these candidates also developed chains of reasoning for each point that they made and came to a conclusion, which was often qualified, that was well-supported by the reasons they had given. Some answers relied almost exclusively on examples to arrive at a largely unsupported conclusion.

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14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

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