

GCSE

Humanities

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J445**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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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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CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
Unit B031 Cross-curricular Themes	4
Unit B032 Application of Knowledge	7
Unit B033 Controlled Assessment	9

Unit B031 Cross-curricular Themes

General Comments:

The paper followed a similar format and had similar expectations as last year. There were a number of very good scripts where candidates were able to show their understanding of key concepts and individual knowledge of the differing elements involved in this cross – curricular specification.

The a) sections of each question provided an opportunity for candidates to show this understanding. In this section the Mark scheme expected a good response to show an explanation of the concept, and provide one appropriate example.

The b) sections were purely extraction responses. All of the information could be found within the text of the documents. A good response would find the appropriate answer and quote it from the document in as complete a way as possible without paraphrasing (which if not done well could result in the wrong meaning / answer being given)

The c) sections expected essay style responses, which could be structured using the prompts provided, or could be based on their own knowledge. Good answers combined the two effectively. To reach top of Level 4 a conclusion was expected which did not simply repeat the points already made but was able to take their argument one stage further.

Question 5 (AO2) looked for some reference to the documents provided. Good answers drew extensively on the relevant information and included quotations, used in context, to support an argument . As this information is available to all candidates it is a pity that some choose not to use it to enhance their response and benefit from the 6 marks this element can give.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.1

- 1ai) Many candidates found this difficult. To gain 3 marks they had to write about an ACT of parliament : what it is, how it is made, perhaps provide an example of a law . Unfortunately many saw the word 'parliament ' and wrote about what parliament consists of and its function.
- 1aii) Very few candidates knew what a 'Legal Precedent ' is and over 90% failed to score any marks.
- 1bi) The main reason for low marks was an failure to provide a full reason eg 'Too white, too privileged or 'too male'. All three were required for 1 mark. If only 2 out of the three were given the response could not be credited.
- 1bii) Many tried to paraphrase the extracted response and changed the meaning so that their answer could not be accepted
- 1c) Perhaps because of the recent Scottish referendum this question was answered well and showed good knowledge of the sections dealing with referenda and Parliamentary elections.
The UK's involvement with the EU was often linked as an example to the section dealing with referenda, and the section on Local government showed little understanding of the process of, or reasons for, Local government. Those who scored highly provided relevant examples from their own knowledge.

Question 2

- 2ai) & ii) Many candidates found it difficult to differentiate between 'Flexible working' and 'Part-time working'. The element of 'choice' was confused with limited hours worked. Surprisingly very few mentioned 'Job share' as one of their facts.
- 2bi) This was a very well answered question. Again however brevity of response caused marks to be lost: eg 'payday loans are quite cheap' but omitting 'if paid back on time' and 'available to anyone' omitting 'to almost anyone'.
- 2bii) An excellent response to this element.
- 2c) Most responses dealt very well with the sections on 'changes in technology' 'feminisation of the workforce', and the impact of e-commerce. Good answers showed both positive as well as negative consequences of these changes and illustrated the points made with relevant examples. The section dealing with 'changes in the organisation of work' was less well covered. A discussion of the shift from sector to sector and the more flexible approach to working was required here.

Question 3

- 3ai) A lot of answers confused 'renewable energy' with 'renewable resources'. The mark scheme did not accept 'resources which are infinite' for this reason.
- 3aii) The question required candidates to write about 'ENVIRONMENTAL effects of future economic development' and so many responses which referred to economic effects could not be credited. The mark scheme was looking for examples such as loss of habitats due to urbanisation / deforestation etc.
- 3bi) & ii) Another well answered extraction question. Again the reason some marks were lost was due to brevity of response eg 'compare their results' instead of 'compare the results of different models / with reality'.
- 3c) Because the prompts were quite specific many of the weaker responses only included the information provided by the prompts without trying to either develop them or provide examples to illustrate them eg 'Ice Ages in the past are an indication that the climate has changed without the impact of humans'. Good answers included relevant examples in all 4 sections.

Question 4

- 4ai) Merely saying that a religious law is a law that is religious could not earn any marks. What was expected was an explanation of where they come from or Why are they upheld. A relevant example could also have been provided.
- 4aii) Although this seemed to be a relatively easy question a surprising number of candidates struggled to provide anything apart from examples and unfortunately only one example could be rewarded. It wasn't enough to say 'everyone is equal' they needed to say 'because God created everyone, we are all equal'.
- 4bi) Very well answered although those who tried paraphrasing their response sometimes came unstuck.
- 4bii) This also proved tricky for those whose answers were too brief eg 'Muslims have an account of the creation' was not accepted because it didn't add 'which is close to modern scientific theories'.
- 4c) Although this essay was answered quite well there were two reasons why some good candidates lost marks. The first was writing about one religion instead of comparing two. There were some excellent responses which dealt only with Christianity, but they could only achieve Level 1 / 2 marks. The second reason for lost marks was not linking their response to the element of 'suffering'. Some wrote at length about moral and

natural evil and belief in life after death describing each in detail without showing how they were linked to the element of 'suffering' required in this question.

Question 5

- 5ai) aii) & aii) were all answered relatively well with candidates able to extract information from the documents without problem
- 5aiv) This again suffered from candidates being too brief in their response 'Smoking & drinking' was often offered as a response when the Mark scheme expected 'lifestyle habits eg smoking and drinking'.
- 5c) Many candidates scored well on the AO1 element of this and good responses included relevant examples to support their argument. However the AO2 element was weaker because of a lack of referral to the documents, 6 marks are available for this element and many good responses were too concerned with explaining their own opinions rather than linking their response to the sources provided.

Unit B032 Application of Knowledge

General Comments:

The Paper followed a similar structure to last year and the outcomes were also very similar.

Extraction questions (1,2,7,& 9)were well answered.

Many candidates were aware of the differences between this type of paper where responses must be exclusively related to the documents, and other papers where their own knowledge can earn marks. Some struggled to maintain this differentiation throughout the whole paper .

Most candidates are aware of the various research methods required but often do not include details such as 'provenance ' and 'utility' in their answers and so cannot access higher levels.

This year it was noticeable that some candidates were using rather general terms to explain the differences between sources eg "this source is a .com /.org ' and basing their evaluation on this rather by identifying the actual / specific origin of the document.

Again, as in previous years, some candidates when answering Q6 simply say 'this is reliable / unreliable / biased etc ' without saying why. A generic statement of this sort cannot be credited as it does not show specific understanding of the research method being considered .

In questions 5 & 12, where candidates are required to agree and disagree with the statements, some did not make it very clear where they changed course with their arguments. Others said they were providing an opposite argument when in fact theywere continuing with their original viewpoint.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question Nos.1 & 2

Both of these extraction questions were very well answered.

Question 3

Although this too was an extraction question, many candidates struggled with the Health and Safety document, implying that H & S are an organisation which can help employees claim compensation from their employers.

Question 4

Many candidates were able to achieve Level 2 simply by providing a developed statement about employees' rights and employers' responsibilities (although a few mixed up the two). However very few continued to Level 3, where they were expected to identify the different nature of the two documents. Very few were able to comment on which document was the most compelling .

Question 5

This was a more difficult question.. Most were able to either agree or disagree with the statement but very few were able to do both. Some good answers commented on the provenance of the evidence.

Question 6a)

Candidates rushed into their answers having seen the word 'statistics ' and a lot of their responses could not be credited as they did not relate specifically to 'Official statistics.

Question 6b)

Most candidates knew about primary sources and were able to link this to social research.

Questions 7, 8, & 9

All of these questions were answered very well indeed, although some attempted to shorten their response ie 'Europe ' instead of 'European Community ' and so lost marks.

Question 10

This document caused many candidates to struggle. Whilst the majority were able to say what the Director of Greenpeace thought, some were confused by the irony of his words. Many also thought that David Cameron was suggesting that ' Europe had gone too far ' with technological developments rather than 'environmental legislation'. This resulted in slightly lower than expected marks for an extraction question.

Question 11

Most candidates (as last year) were content to take the information from the document at face value and make little attempt to explain its utility or reliability. Only a few commented on its provenance and even fewer on the need to compare it with other documents. Many saw the source as the EEA rather than the Guardian newspaper, and this obviously affected their argument.

Question 12

In this essay question the response had to show both agreement and disagreement with the statement.

Most were able to do one but not the other and sometimes they claimed to be writing about the opposite viewpoint, but in fact were simply continuing their original argument.

Only a small number reached Level 5 by identifying the limitations of relying on limited accounts, and providing a conclusion which was supported by their evaluation of the sources.

Unit B033 Controlled Assessment

General Comments:

This year's entry showed candidates choosing the more easily accessible topics, but examination of these was sometimes a little superficial. Many candidates showed an awareness of social science research models, and the skills required for these, but there was some evidence that candidates had approached this as an essay. In these cases, evidence for structured research was at times lacking.

AO2c: Reach Reasoned Conclusions.

It is important that candidates ensure their conclusions are firmly rooted in their research; they must be drawn from what they have found out and support them with very specific, named evidence. Some candidates relied too heavily on general linkages such as "my research", "the articles I found", and sometimes just "data". All of these are insufficient for marks at the higher levels. Direct quotation and reference to specific data are good examples of how this can be achieved. Candidates are still sometimes beginning with their opinion, then selecting evidence which supports this. As a result, conclusions will be confirmation of what the candidate thinks/believes and should not gain many marks.

AO3a: Research Methodology.

It was noticeable that a number of candidates have not described their methodology in full. While it is important to keep to the word limit, there must be some explanation of what methods have been used and why. The use of a methodology table can help with this, but to achieve the highest marks, this must be extremely detailed and give some indication of methods which have been rejected as well as selected.

Many candidates produced a questionnaire/survey, but sometimes these were rather basic, and in some cases, lacked profiling questions. Work which relies only on secondary evidence will not meet the assessment criteria for the higher levels for this AO, and will impact on achievement for AO2c as well since the conclusions will effectively be a summary of other people's opinions rather than what the candidate has concluded. Candidates who include explicit details of planning will score more highly.

AO3b: Locate, select and organise material relevant to the enquiry.

Internet sources were heavily used, but there was increasing awareness of the variety this type of research can provide, but there was once again some evidence of candidates using a limited range of sources. In enquiries where there was little primary research conducted, the use of limited secondary sources had a profound impact on what the candidate could achieve. The use of official data enhanced many projects.

AO3c: Record and present findings.

Many candidates had chosen to word process their work, and many were attractively and neatly presented, with a clear organisational structure and clearly tabulated data. There was also evidence of a lack of attention to presentational features in some cases. Graphs and charts should have figures or percentages, as well as captions.

The highest achieving candidates had undertaken significant analysis of their findings (rather than description or summary), and collated these with their secondary source materials in a meaningful and clearly logical manner but some candidates allowed their data to stand alone, with limited comment on them. There was a lack of referencing in many pieces, and bibliographies were sometimes constructed. Candidates who use academic referencing mechanisms will score more highly.

AO4c: Evaluate the research methodology.

A number of candidates had produced some very limited evaluation. Sources and research methods were not always evaluated for bias and reliability. To a certain extent, achievement in this AO relies on what was produced for AO3a; if candidates do not describe and explain their research methodologies fully, their evaluations are likely to be limited as well. General comments such as “I thought it went well” or “I could have found more articles” are not generally indicators of high marks.

To gain the highest marks, the candidate should evaluate the complete methodology, with suggestions of reasonable and viable alternative methodologies, rather than statement of what they could/would/should do if they were to do this again. For the highest mark bands it is insufficient to say simply that they would, for example, ask more people, or choose better questions.

Candidates who have a clear understanding of different methodologies and what these are likely to produce must relate this to their own research enquiry, rather than simply describe how to undertake research. There were a number of candidates who described research methods in general, rather than the ones they had chosen.

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