

GCE

Critical Thinking

Advanced GCE **A2 H452**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H052**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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

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F501 Introduction to Critical Thinking

General Comments:

There was a wide range of performance, with a significant number gaining 60 marks and the majority within striking distance of 30 marks. Most candidates attempted all questions, with very specific answers well targeted to the questions. This was especially so on Question 6 assessing weakness in reasoning and Question 9(a) assessing credibility.

Candidates as a whole displayed their skills to the best advantage in:

- Q.1(a) identifying conclusions
- Q.1(e) identifying argument indicator words
- Q.3 alternative explanation and assessing representativeness
- Q.5 suggesting a reason.

Whilst the following questions tended to challenge their skills:

- Q.1(c) identifying counter assertions
- Q.2 stating an explaining the argument element
- Q.8 identifying consistency
- Q.9(b) weighing up importance.

The latter two evidenced a few No Responses, which was very rare in other questions.

Candidates made good use of specialist terms, especially those of credibility in Section B. 'Expertise' and 'Ability to see' were widely used to good effect. Reputation was more difficult to justify without speculation, apart from a vested interest to maintain professionalism, where it was obvious that the source held a position of authority and was in the public eye. Stronger candidates were able to distinguish between vested interest and bias, using both appropriately.

On the whole, time management appeared to be well planned. Most candidates reached Question 10 with sufficient time to present a detailed and specifically targeted reasoned case, often with a plan to tackle this. There was evidence this session of a minority with a curtailed Question 10 or one which ended mid-sentence, suggesting that some candidates had run out of time.

Additional material on continuation sheets was clearly labelled with the question numbers, which helped to ensure that extra material could be readily recognised and potentially credited. Most candidates wrote legibly, with only a few presenting answers that were a challenge to decipher.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1(a) Most candidates identified Boyd's conclusion correctly. A number gave 'local theatres will stop doing plays' as the answer to Ayckbourn's conclusion.

1(b) Identifying the hypothetical reasoning was well answered. A minority gave only half of the answer. A few sought out an 'if' and incorrectly identified 'if equally intense time in the cinema.'

1(c) The strongest candidates correctly identified the counter assertions. Some identified the appropriate section of the text, but included other argument elements. Others copied out large portions of the text which appeared to challenge, without specifically being a counter assertion.

1(d) The strongest answers identified the correct part of the text as the exemplifications and others paraphrased this. Both approaches were credited.

1(e) The strongest correctly identified three or more indicator words and explained what element each indicated. Some 'identified' words not found in the text such as 'so', 'however' and

‘for instance’, suggesting that they were repeating learned terms rather than applying their skills to the text. ‘Some’ was a popular incorrect answer.

2 The strongest gained both marks in (a) for counter reason and at least one mark in (b) for recognising that this ‘opposed’. Many gained partial marks for identifying ‘counter’ with the addition of a variety of other elements such as ‘counter assertion’, ‘counter claim’ or ‘counter conclusion’; or alternatively for identifying ‘reason’. Very few identified critical thinking terms that were not argument elements such as ‘appeal to emotion’. ‘Assumption’ also figured in some answers.

3(a) Correct answers for an alternative explanation focused on a change, such as *increased* population, *increased* tourism, *decreased* cost or *more* popular plays. Most related this increase to the impact on ticket sales.

3(b)(i) Most focused upon *similar* atmosphere or the *shared* desire to see personalities live as indicating representivity. Some appeared to think they were being asked to examine live entertainment versus recorded versions.

3(b)(ii) Most did manage to give a comparison, rather than just looking at gigs or other live entertainment. A few gained partial marks for describing a factor for going to gigs which would not be a reason for going to the theatre, rather than contrasting this with a reason why people go to plays. Others ended ‘not the same at the theatre’ again gaining one mark. Others gave answers related to the characteristics of the audiences, such as ‘The young go to gigs and the old attend theatre’, which could not be credited.

4 The strongest assumptions included specific reference to either London or the regions, gaining full marks. Very few re-stated the claim.

5 The strongest gave a reason that recognised that this claim would bring benefit to either the regional productions or the region itself. Most gave a *general* reason that did not reference the regions and gained two marks. A number gave relevant answers that included more than one element, with a few writing a paragraph of several sentences. These gained one mark.

6 Candidates tackled this question well. Most identified the correct conclusion, whilst a number identified ‘everyone has the best view’ as the conclusion. Stronger candidates ably assessed the link in the reasoning, focusing on either the generalisation or the difference between close ups and accuracy. Some ably assessed the reasoning but not the link and only a very few made a challenge to the reasoning. Some assessed the wrong paragraph from the document, focusing on the ‘thrilling shared audience experience’ in paragraph 4.

7 Many gave full bodied answers focusing upon Nesta’s funding by the National Lottery to give them a vested interest to give accurate information to maintain the professionalism required for this funding. The limited undeveloped answers tended to focus upon the ‘independent’ nature of the charity, some gaining a mark for neutrality when coupled with funded by the National Lottery. Those who assessed Hassan Bakhshi, rather than the document, were able to gain 1 mark.

8 Many identified the correct part of the text and its source. Very few identified the claim without the source or vice versa. Some gave claims from other sources, mostly from Michael Billington. There were a number of No Responses for this question.

9(a) The strongest answers included the ‘what else you need to know’ element and the very best were able to sustain this throughout the three assessments. Those that related this to the credibility of Freestone, such as the extent of her expertise, gained full credit. Few focused upon gaining proof to support the claims, rather than the credibility of the source.

Most made at least one correct assessment with direct reference to the main focus of the claim about ‘cost’ or what ‘venues choose’. Those that made indirect or general reference to the claim could not access the marks for ‘what else you need to know’. Very few made no reference to the claim by simply assessing Freestone’s credibility in general.

Assessments based on vested interest, expertise and ability to see were used to best effect, the strongest assessments making a clear difference between the latter two. Assessments based on reputation were difficult to justify without presuming additional knowledge.

9(b) Most justified why one criterion was strong. Those that went on to weigh up why this criterion was *stronger* than another were able to potentially go on to gain the two further marks. Most saw the criterion of ability to see as the strongest despite the *possible* vested interest to distort this. A number wrote generic answers that could not be credited, rather than focussing on Freestone’s credibility. There were some instances of No Response for this question.

10 The candidates that responded to the bullets in the question, recognising the different focus of the relative credibility of *successful capture* of theatre performance the relative plausibility of *decreasing live theatre attendance* usually went on to achieve high marks. Others began with plausibility and carried that focus into the credibility of those who claimed or inferred an impact on theatre attendance. Others attempted to marry successful capture and decreased live theatre attendance in their assessment of relative credibility. Provided candidates made clear the stance of the sides for which they assessed relative credibility, they were credited on the merit of the credibility assessed. Some candidates assessed the credibility *for* decrease and *for* successful capture, clearly believing they were assessing two different sides.

Some that appeared to be pressed for time assessed only plausibility, or more commonly, only credibility, thus limiting their potential marks. Similarly some restricted their potential by assessing only one source on a side for relative credibility. This was more noticeable on the side *for* successful capture, where the NTL was not always used for assessment.

With regard to relative credibility, some linked sources on a side and successfully assessed credibility using the same criterion in the same breath. Others attempted this but did not sufficiently establish *why each* source would have for example expertise in the theatre industry to interpret the impact correctly. A simple reference to their job titles would have given some justification. The credibility criteria of expertise, ability to see and a vested interest to maintain public confidence/professionalism tended to be used effectively. Reputation was difficult to justify without speculation, as was *lack of* expertise and *lack of* ability to see.

Plausibility *for* a decrease was expertly developed by some by pointing out the impact of cheaper tickets, the added accessibility, the trends supporting modern technology and the opportunities to see the best productions. Plausibility *against* a decrease tended to repeat the arguments in the text rather than develop them further, although strong answers argued for special nights out and the desire to see actors in person.

Most reached a judgement, whether at the beginning which they went on to support, or at the end in a concluding assessment. The strongest gave an overall judgment based on both plausibility and credibility. Most judged that NTL screenings would have *some* negative impact on live theatre attendance, but that this would not be significant because of the traditions of theatre going.

F502 Assessing and Developing Argument

General Comments:

The topic of the “throwaway society” proved accessible to candidates. In section B there is still a tendency for some candidates, when asked to evaluate the *author’s* argument, to respond with a retort of their own.

Candidates still often forget that in this specification, the term *assumption* stands for an *unstated assumption*. Therefore candidates who write ‘the author is assuming that...’ followed by a quote or a paraphrase, are not actually identifying an assumption, but rather they are challenging the author’s claim.

The time allocation seems to have been appropriate; nearly all candidates finished in the allotted time, but there was very little doodling or other indications that the time was too much.

The space in the answer book was also adequate. Candidates should be discouraged from asking for an additional answer book when they have still left the additional pages (14-16) blank.

There appeared to be an increase in scripts which were entirely, or partly, word-processed. There were a very few scripts where the award of marks was rendered problematic by illegible handwriting – such candidates should be encouraged to word process their answers.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Ques. No.	Topic	Type	Comments
1	Food production	assumption	2nd hardest; C proved a popular distractor
2		weakness	fairly easy, not much discrimination
3		most weaken	fairly easy
4	Football pay	Intermediate Conclusion	A was the most popular distractor
5		identify element	Easiest, least discrimination
6		name appeal	Hardest; both A and B were popular distractors
7		flaw	fairly hard; wrong answers fairly equally distributed between the three distractors
8	Adverts	Main Conclusion	hard, best discrimination
9		flaw	B was the most popular distractor
10	Reporting change	Main Conclusion	2nd easiest
11		identify element	fairly easy, not much discrimination; C was the most popular distractor
12		most weaken	A was the most popular distractor
13	Capitalism	Intermediate Conclusion	A was the most popular distractor
14		assumption	fairly hard; D was the most popular distractor
15		most strengthen	A & D were the most popular distractors

Question No.

16 & 17 All parts of these questions discriminated well, especially 17c; 16 and 17b had some of the highest facilities on the paper.

18a - The analogy

In previous sessions candidates have quoted large chunks of text which made it impossible to judge if they have precisely identified points of comparison. For the first time the format of the answer book was changed to force them to be precise. This made it much easier to credit correct comparisons. In spite of there being 7 possible scoring points from which candidates only had to find 3, this question still had the lowest facility of all the questions on this paper, but the marks were much higher, and it discriminated better than the corresponding question last year. It was surprising how many candidates referred to items from Paragraph 3.

18b - Weakness in the analogy

In previous sessions the analogy has compared something apparently unrelated (e.g. harvesting strawberries) to establish a point about the main topic of the passage (e.g. promoting school students to the next academic year). In this case however the author is comparing one example of the throwaway society (mobiles) and saying it can be extended to another (coats/suits). Some candidates rejected the author's claim that it is normal or desirable or necessary to replace mobile phones frequently. Whilst that is a contrary point of view which can be supported, counters are generally not credited in section B (they appear in section C). Other candidates focused on a similarity between phones and clothes or a difference which would lead us to replace clothes more frequently than phones. Since this would strengthen the author's argument, and the question asks for a weakness, such answers were capped at 1 as stated in the mark scheme. Having said that, it wasn't too hard for candidates to find a two-sided comparison which works the right way round, e.g. phones become obsolete much faster than coats/suits for a fairly easy 2 marks. The 3rd mark, for 'impact' proved harder. Since they were asked for a weakness, there was no credit for saying 'this weakens the analogy' or 'this is a weakness in the analogy'. What was needed was some appreciation of the point above that the impact of the weakness is that one cannot therefore conclude that coats should be thrown away frequently.

A few candidates focused on the difference between (phone) contracts and borrowing. For this to be a weakness, it has to lead to the conclusion that it is reasonable to borrow money to buy an expensive coat, because it will last or remain fashionable for a long time. Clearly you would not borrow money for a coat unless it was expensive and/or you were poor, and in either case you wouldn't want to throw the coat away any time soon, so the issue of borrowing rather begs the question of whether a coat is meant to last. It doesn't really weaken the argument as borrowing money is a possible consequence of your belief that coats should last, not a reason for that belief. If you support the throwaway society you will buy a cheap coat, and the issue of borrowing money becomes irrelevant.

19 - Evaluation of the example of Washing Machines

'You must explain how effectively it [the example of washing machines] supports the claim ['Companies themselves are encouraging the throwaway society by manufacturing lower cost, less repairable products']. What it says about washing machines, from a *Which* report is 'that in 1970-71 the cost of a washing machine was roughly 8% of average annual earnings and 50% of all washing machines broke down in their first year. Today, the cost of a washing machine is 1.5% of the average annual earnings and the chance of a washing machine breaking down in its first 6 years is now just 12%'

- A. Some students focused on the issue of COST [point A in the mark scheme]. Just saying washing machines cost less than they used to is a 1 mark example in the mark scheme. The reason WHY this could be a strength is that it would make it easier for people to 'throw away' their washing machine and get a new one. The IMPACT of this on the author's

reasoning is limited because the fact that people can afford to replace their washing machine more frequently doesn't mean they will.

The term COST has a certain ambiguity which some stronger candidates spotted. The author uses the term in a way similar to opportunity cost - what fraction of a year's work does an average person have to devote to earning enough to buy a washing machine. Some candidates considered that the cost of a washing machine is the PRICE you pay for it. Those who complained that the author did not take account of the fact that average earnings have risen a lot since 1970, and therefore the cost may now be higher were not credited. In effect they were disputing the evidence. In one sense they had a point – if we imagine that average earnings in 1970 were, say, £2400 and in 2015 were £27000, then taking 8% of the former and 1.5% of the latter means washing machines have risen in price from £192 to £405. However, inflation over 35 years means that the pound in 1970 bear no relation to the pound in 2015, and the author's interpretation of 'cost' supports their reasoning much better than the candidate's. However we did credit candidates who spotted the different meanings of cost, and stated that the evidence supports the idea that washing machines are more affordable, but not necessarily lower in cost.

- B. Some students focused on the issue of BREAKDOWNS. The data unequivocally shows that modern washing machines are far more reliable [WHAT]. The reason WHY this could be a weakness is that this makes it less likely that people will throw away washing machines frequently. The IMPACT is that this does not encourage the throwaway society [if we make the reasonable assumption that breakdowns (rather than, say technological advance) are a major factor in persuading people to replace washing machines].

Some pointed out that the author appears to be drawing a conclusion that washing machines are 'less repairable' based on the data about breakdowns. This could be described arguing from one thing to another, or *non sequitur*, or that the data is not relevant to the claim. Some ignored the evidence and just pointed out that less repairable products do encourage the throwaway society. Whilst it is plausible that washing machines are less repairable, and true that this would encourage the throwaway society, they haven't really answered the question.

A&B. Some combined points about cost and reliability/repairability e.g. the second 3 mark bullet in the mark scheme. Though the question did say 'make **one** point', given the way the claim is phrased 'manufacturing lower cost, less repairable products' this was credited as a single point.

- C. Another ambiguity in the claim is the meaning of the word 'encouraging'. It can mean 'campaigning in favour of' as in 'schools are encouraging their most able pupils to apply to university' or it can mean 'causing' as in 'mild winters are encouraging garden pests to proliferate'. The mark scheme describes this distinction as 'encouraging the throwaway society actively or as a secondary effect through the actions of consumers. An example of the former would be the current advert by a bed company 'encouraging' people to replace their mattress if it is over 8 years old. The danger of this approach (as many candidates were later to comment in their responses to Question 25) is that if a company deliberately markets product that don't last, they may lose their reputation and market share.

In this question, candidates made points along the lines that goods are lower cost and less repairable because of other factors (automation and labour costs) rather than a deliberate attempt to encourage the throwaway society. When the author concludes the paragraph by saying 'It is unfair to judge people for buying the products companies sell' arguably there is the implication that while we should not condemn the 'people' who make up the throwaway society, we could condemn the companies. This interpretation could be applied to Paragraph 3 in isolation but not to the passage as a whole, which is arguing that 'the throwaway society should not be condemned', rather than arguing who we should

condemn for it. As for the view that ‘encouraging’ here just means ‘causing’, then this point can well form part of the responses discussed above about cost, break-downs, and reliability.

The intention was that candidates would evaluate what was said about washing machines in Paragraph 3 rather than simply discussing in general whether or not washing machines are a typical example of what has come to be known as white goods.

20 - Make one point of evaluation about the use of evidence in Paragraph 4

The evidence referred to is clear ‘12.5% of discarded clothing is given to charities’. The author deduces from this ‘having cheaper clothes is not preventing people from reusing and recycling them. It also supports charitable causes...’, and uses it to refute the House of Lords counter-claim that ‘cheaper clothes ...wear out quickly, and are hard to recycle [and] end up in landfill.’ Some candidates accepted that 12.5% (though small) is significant and better than nothing. Some agreed with the author that giving clothes to charities benefits charitable causes. Whilst true, that alone was deemed too obvious to be worth crediting, and is not relevant to refuting the House of Lords claim. Others accepted that giving clothes to charities may improve the chances that they will be reused and recycled, though this is by no means guaranteed. This could be phrased as saying that the author is limiting the options to *either* giving to charities *or* landfill. However, a crucial point of evaluation is that to refute the House of Lords claim, it is necessary to assume that it is cheaper clothes that are being given to charities, and this may not be the case (indeed it is very plausible that that people give better quality clothes to charity). On the other side of the coin are those who emphasized that 12.5% is a small or insignificant amount (we allowed those who said ‘statistically insignificant’ though in the absence of the raw data from which this % was calculated we cannot determine the margin of error, but clearly the amount given to charities is not zero). That being the case, it only offers limited support to all the author’s claims. The author is not claiming that the rise in sales of cheaper clothing has actually increased the % going to charity, so answers which complain that we don’t have historic data to make comparisons were not credited.

21a This was relatively easy, but did not discriminate very well.

21b The reference to the text should be to the text quoted in the question, ‘customers pay VAT’ is the cause and the ‘government gains money’ is the effect. It is not helpful here to quote a different bit of text, such as the main conclusion ‘the throwaway society should not be condemned’. There is a perennial problem whenever this question appears, in that candidates provide a justification which begs the question; ‘it is an explanation because it does not have a reason or conclusion’ when in reality it is the other way round; the fact it does not have a reason or conclusion is precisely because it is an explanation, not an argument.’ Other justifications which are ambiguous or circular are to say that ‘it is an *explanation* because it *explains why*.....’ or ‘it is an explanation as it has the indicator word because’. Given that the question presents a binary choice: argument or explanation, it is acceptable to say why it is *not* an argument; ‘it does not try to persuade the reader that the government gains money – this is an accepted fact.’

22 This proved to have the second lowest facility and therefore did not discriminate very well.

Paragraph 5 - Teaching sewing etc. in schools

A There was a fairly easy mark for identifying **hypothetical reasoning**, and referring to the appropriate text ‘If the government wanted to stop the throwaway society, schools would teach children how to ...sew etc.’ To get the second mark, candidates had to *explain* the weakness, which is not the same as presenting a counter. It would have been enough to say that the consequence (schools would teach sewing) doesn’t necessarily follow from the antecedent (the government wanting to stop the throwaway society). Or, as the mark scheme puts it, there is a non sequitur. (there are a lot of things which governments want which are not taught in schools – to take an example which arose during the marking, the government wants to conclude

satisfactory trade agreements for when Brexit takes effect, but schools are unlikely to teach pupils how to conduct trade negotiations). A problem with the author's reasoning is that they are not trying to persuade us about what schools do or do not do; what the author is actually arguing is that if schools taught sewing then it would show the government opposed the throwaway society, but as schools don't teach sewing it shows they don't oppose the throwaway society. So while we are crediting for the second mark 'the consequent doesn't follow from the antecedent', an even better criticism would be that the author has got the consequent and the antecedent the wrong way round. Or in other words if the consequent is false [teaching sewing] is neither necessary nor sufficient to deduce that the antecedent is false [government wanting to stop the throwaway society].

B. Circular argument - responses of this type were not seen.

C. Virtually the only other evaluation of Paragraph 5 to gain credit was the point that if we accept the author's claim that 'most people do not know how to repair clothes etc.' (and there was no credit for repudiating this claim, or branding it a generalization) that does not mean that this *ought* to be the case. This is Hume's classical *is-ought* problem which dates back to 1739, but based on what is in the specification, candidates could and did refer to it as an appeal to popularity. It is not an appeal to tradition as the author is arguing *against* traditional 'make do and mend' attitudes. One common response which was not credited was to claim that the author was *restricting the options*, by saying that teaching sewing etc. was the only way the government could stop the throwaway society.

Paragraph 6 VAT on clothing

D. The most common source of marks in Question 22 was to point out the final sentence 'If people are encouraged to spend less, the government will receive less tax, meaning that we will no longer be able to provide free education and free health care' is a *slippery slope* [1 mark] because it goes by steps which are not logically linked to an extreme consequence [not so many got this second mark] NB the second mark could not be gained by a counter rather than an explanation – the place for candidate's own arguments is in section C. For example statements such as 'the government could raise other taxes to compensate for the loss of VAT' whilst plausible, were not what was being credited.

E. The above slippery slope happens to be in the form of a hypothetical reason, so, though it is similar to the above point, candidates could also get a mark for pointing this out, and a second mark for explaining that the consequence (no free education etc.) does not follow from the antecedent (people spending less). Once again, a counter (e.g. 'if people spend less on consumer goods/clothes they may spend more on services – eating out/private education/private health care etc.) though highly plausible, was not what was needed.

The mark scheme gives various other evaluative points; of these, the one most commonly seen was point H; 'Assumption - when the government gains money it is used for the country's benefit' When candidates want to dispute a claim in the passage, they frequently say 'the author assumes ... ' and then quote it, forgetting that in this paper, assumption stands for *unstated* assumption. The mark scheme specifically says 0 marks for 'a counter masquerading as an assumption'. Though there was a mark for explaining a weakness and a mark for correct reference to the text, these marks were not awarded independently, otherwise candidates could either get marks by quoting random bits of text and saying the reasoning is weak, OR by naming and explaining random flaws in a generic way without any reference to the text. (or by a reference to the wrong bit of text). That made it more likely that incomplete responses would get *zero*, and complete ones *two* marks. However it was still possible to get *one* mark by naming a weakness and a reference to the correct bit of text, but without an explanation (or a wrong or inadequate explanation).

23 - The question wanted candidates to consider 'It is better to give your time to charities rather than money. A few candidates however took the claim to mean: 'It is better to give your time to charities rather than (*give your time to making*) money'. Though this is a slightly strained interpretation, it was decided to allow it.

Examples of reasons (green indicate points shown in the mark scheme)	
In favour of time	In favour of money
From the point of view of the donor	
Some people don't have spare money	Some people don't have spare time
More fulfilling / make friends / a route into paid employment for the young (it looks good on one's CV / avoids boredom and keeps one active for the old	Much wider of choice of charities – e.g. overseas ones, or medical research
From the point of view of the charity	
They may already have enough money (e.g. from government grants)	They may already have enough volunteers
Can make use of the idealism of the young/shows more commitment	Gives more flexibility to respond e.g. overseas
Time from volunteers can generate money (e.g. by helping fundraising, or working in a charity shop)	Money can be used to employ people. (e.g. experts)/ volunteers may not have the right skills
You can't use the money without having people working	You need money to pay expenses of volunteers
From the point of view of the end beneficiary or society in general	
Money can easily be wasted through, e.g. corruption/ high salaries for charity bosses/ inefficient administration [cynicism about this was very common!] /end up in the hands of terrorists	Western volunteers in the third world end up doing things local people could have done: the money would have been more welcome
Lonely people would appreciate the personal touch / time from a volunteer more than money	Poor people would appreciate money more than advice
A strong main conclusion must have the words ' time ' ' give ' and ' money ' and also the word ' better ' unless they opt for a nuanced approach of saying both are equally important, which was rarely seen.	

24(a)(i) There will inevitably be some close calls about what is or is not an extra element, so the best advice to candidates is not to quote the question and keep the response as brief as possible. The reason that 'you can get some money back if you sell' was seen as weak, because if you borrowed you might not have had to pay anything in the first place (the question is about borrowing rather than, say, hiring or renting). On the other hand it is valid to say that if you own you may be able to sell at a profit.

24(a)(ii) This proved to be the easiest mark on the whole paper, and also therefore the least discrimination. We did credit advantages of owning rather than borrowing *money*, even though in a sense this would lead to diametrically opposite behaviour, since owning possessions generally requires the spending or even borrowing of money.

24(b) Extra elements were not penalized, as the question paper didn't make it completely clear that candidates should give a HR and nothing else. This ensured some high marks. Candidates who suggested that if you borrow something, you can damage it with impunity were only given limited credit as this would often not be the case.

Q25

Examples of reasons, Intermediate Conclusions and Main Conclusions

From the point of view of the customer
Value/Saves money in the long run.
Saves the time and hassle of replacing.
Consumer rights/being tricked/unfair that poor people can only afford cheap goods but then have to pay for frequent replacements.
Some faulty goods can be dangerous (cars which crash, electrical goods start fires etc.).
Can be passed on to children.
From the point of view of the firm
Benefits their reputation/brand loyalty/pride of employees. Many claimed this would guarantee higher profits which is an oversimplification. Stores like Primark and Poundland can also be profitable.
May benefit from charging for repairs/having to do fewer free repairs under warranty.
From the point of view of society
Less raw materials, less global warming from manufacture, less land fill SO (Intermediate Conclusion) better for the environment.
Examples of likely intermediate conclusions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be benefits for the customers. • There will be economic benefits. • There will be environmental benefits.
A strong main conclusion must have the words 'products' and 'made to last' We would have allowed more nuanced conclusions of the type 'Products should be made to last for an appropriate length of time' (though such answers proved rare or non-existent). We also allowed more emphatic conclusions 'all products should actually be made to last' Those who argued against the claim were capped at 3 marks.

Some candidates were somewhat side-tracked into talking about sustainability or biodegradability, which are separate issues. Products intended to be thrown away immediately may or may not be made of biodegradable materials (e.g. different types of egg boxes) and likewise products made to last also may or may not be biodegradable (e.g. wooden furniture versus furniture from synthetic materials). Similarly the wood for furniture may or may not have come from sustainably managed forests.

Some candidates thought that making products that last would end exploitation of cheap labour in the third world. This is a possible, but not an easy argument to make, and most attempts were somewhat naïve.

F503 Ethical Reasoning & Decision-making

General Comments:

The number of candidates taking this exam has declined sharply following the announcement that it would cease to be available after 2018. A significant minority of candidates wrote answers which might have done well in a General Studies exam but showed little or no evidence of the specific skills involved in Critical Thinking: some of these may have been single candidates taking the exam on their own initiative.

A few candidates made use of additional answer booklets without having used the extra pages in the main answer booklet.

From session to session, the topics chosen for this unit vary between public policy, personal lifestyle and the policies of commercial and public institutions. The focus in Questions 3 and 4 this time was explicitly on personal choices, but many candidates wrote all or part of their answers about public policy and legislation instead. Although some individuals and couples do choose to have no children, candidates who tried to envisage this option as legally obligatory on everyone found it unsurprisingly difficult to imagine and evaluate in Question 3 or Question 4.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1a The main purpose lying behind this question was to alert candidates to the influence of other factors on population size, apart from birth rate. Most candidates were awarded 2 marks out of 2, but some gave the same answer twice, in different words, a few offered only one answer, and a few offered birth rate as an answer despite the words ‘other than increasing birthrate’ in the question.

1b Quite a lot of valid points could be made, and most candidates spotted at least two or three of them; some exceeded the requirement for full marks. Some candidates offered rather longer answers than required for 4 marks. A number of candidates wrongly took it for granted that people of working age would be able to sustain the retired, provided they outnumbered them.

2 Very few candidates performed well on this question. Many realized that there was something wrong in the discussion of overcrowding in paragraph 2, but most of them found it difficult to explain just what the problem was.

Many candidates challenged the analogy in paragraph 3. Vague challenges, such as that the issues were different or irrelevant, were not credited, because there was a relevant connexion, namely that all three of the issues were cases of the State restricting the freedom of its citizens. In order to achieve 3 marks, candidates needed to explain that the examples were being used to undervalue the justification for state interference, but not many did this. Another valid approach was to use the author’s examples against him, by claiming that since the Government was justified in banning fox-hunting and smoking in workplaces, they were justified in limiting reproduction, too. The claim that issues about reproduction are more important than the other examples was credited as marginal, because the author actually says this himself.

Many candidates claimed that the language in paragraph 5 constituted an *argumentum ad hominem*, but this was credited as only a marginal answer (for 1 mark), since a defining feature of that flaw is to attack opponents **instead** of engaging with their arguments, whereas this author did both.

Some candidates made more or less persuasive points about the credibility of the newspaper or the author, but these were not credited, because they did not constitute weaknesses in the reasoning.

3 Many candidates seemed unclear as to whether they were envisaging a choice being adopted by individuals or by everyone. This created particular difficulty for those who evaluated the choice of having no children.

Nearly all candidates accepted the suggestion in the question paper of using 'effect on the environment' as one of their criteria, and many drew on Document 1 to support their evaluation; most of these evaluations were valid and fairly well-supported, although a few were superficial.

Effect on the economy was another fruitful criterion chosen by many candidates. 'Cost' was also fairly popular, but some seemed to use it to mean effects on the economy. Some candidates used the criterion 'public opinion', but these evaluations tended to be speculative. It was difficult to say much of interest about ease of implementation, unless it was on the basis that a choice was imposed by the government rather than chosen by individuals.

4 Most candidates, albeit not all, presented their answers clearly, allocating one point per paragraph and one paragraph per point, and several ended each paragraph with a summative intermediate conclusion, which improved the mark awarded for quality of reasoning. A good number had wisely chosen to spend time planning their answer before setting pen to paper.

Many candidates lost marks because all or part of their discussion was about whether or not to 'allow' people to have as many or as few children as they want, instead of concentrating on choices facing individuals.

Most candidates used Utilitarianism as one of their principles. Many of those discussions were relatively superficial, stating no more than that people would be made happy by being able to have as many or as few children as they wanted, but a few candidates explored diverse consequences, particularly those identified in Documents 1 and 2. A few of the best answers pertinently discussed the difference between total and average Utilitarianism. Very few candidates considered dimensions of the Hedonic Calculus other than extent.

Many candidates appealed to Libertarianism or the Principle of Liberty, but most of them used it to oppose government control, which was strictly not relevant to the topic of this exam. It was possible to argue that if a couple chooses to have (for example) one child fewer than they would ideally have liked, this is still their free choice. Some of the appeals to Libertarianism contrasted it with Paternalism, which in nearly all cases was not credited because it did not refer to personal choice (although it could legitimately refer to a policy of education and encouragement, as recommended in Document 1).

Both versions of the Categorical Imperative were potentially relevant to this topic, and a good number of candidates applied one or both of them appropriately.

The veil of ignorance was used by many candidates, with varying degrees of success. The difficulty some candidates encountered in applying this principle lay in the importance of age to this topic, since nearly everyone can expect to be of different ages during their life.

Quite a lot of candidates made appropriate use of Divine Command and/or Natural Law ethics, correctly identifying procreation and stewardship of the natural world as religious duties.

Many candidates appealed to various plausible free-standing principles, but few of them offered any justification for those principles. The most popular was the right to decide how many children to have, but most of those answers were almost circular: people have a right to choose

how many children to have; so they should be able to have as many or as few children as they choose. Very few candidates derived the right to make reproductive choices from the right to marry and bear a family, identified in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Most candidates made good use of the resource documents to support their reasoning, and many made pertinent evaluative comments.

F504 Critical Reasoning

General Comments:

The number of candidates taking this exam has declined sharply following the announcement that it would cease to be available after 2018.

Most candidates performed well, but some seemed not to know the kinds of answers and vocabulary expected in a Critical Thinking exam; some of them attempted evaluation in Question 2 and analysis in Question 3. These may have been individual candidates who had entered under their own initiative, under the misapprehension that Critical Thinking resembles General Studies.

A few candidates ran out of time before completing the paper, but this appeared to be because they had given longer answers to the early questions than were required. It remains generally true that time spent thinking, before beginning to write, is time well spent.

A few candidates made use of additional answer booklets without having used the extra pages in the main answer booklet.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1 Quite a lot of valid points could be made in response to this question, and nearly all candidates at least explained how the examples given in Documents 1 and 2 support the claim. Better candidates realised that the answer has two sides to it and focused on the word 'usually' in their judgements, suggesting that there was enough evidence to infer the stated conclusion. In addition, the best answers showed that some examples of manipulation of photographs are more deceptive and more sinister than others and also pointed out that the evidence provided is sparse and may be unrepresentative. Not many candidates speculated why the photograph in 1a had been manipulated. Most of the candidates who mentioned the defensive statement from the L'Oréal company accepted it as evidence that the manipulation of the advertisement was innocent, instead of challenging it. A few answers exceeded the requirements for full marks. Some candidates devoted more time and space to this answer than was appropriate for 8 marks: some answers to Question 1 were longer than the same candidates' answers to Question 4. By far the most frequent use of the additional pages at the end of the answer booklet was for Question 1.

2 This paragraph consists of three strands of reasoning, all supporting a major intermediate conclusion which in turn feeds into the major conclusion. It is impossible to tell which of these two is which, and both interpretations were therefore credited. Nearly all candidates correctly identified one or other of them as the main conclusion, although a few identified the wrong element and a few denied that the paragraph had a conclusion. Most candidates also correctly identified and analysed the counter-argument with response. Several candidates showed a very clear understanding of the structure of this paragraph. A few candidates misread the question and analysed paragraph 1 instead of or in addition to paragraph 2, while a few others achieved low marks by explaining the gist of the paragraph without using the technical terms of analysis, such as 'reason', 'counter' and 'intermediate conclusion'. Some candidates are still confusing analysis and evaluation, even though the questions are clearly divided by category on the question paper.

3 A few strengths and a long list of weaknesses were available for candidates to mention, and nearly everyone correctly identified several of them; under the time constraints of the exam, no one could be expected to do more. In nearly all cases, the nuggets of well-judged evaluation needed to be excavated from several pages of exposition and comment. A few candidates misunderstood the nature of the question and attempted to analyse the reasoning instead of evaluating it. Some candidates used the skills of literary analysis rather than Critical Thinking, identifying rhetorical techniques and emotive language (for example) as strengths rather than weaknesses. Comments about the credibility of the author were not credited, since they do not constitute strengths or weaknesses in her reasoning.

The example of the change of judges in the *Strictly Come Dancing* television programme was not recent enough for many candidates to know about it, which led to some inaccurate speculation. Some candidates suggested counter-factually that age may not have been the reason why Arlene Phillips was replaced, but few if any suggested that viewers of an entertainment programme might prefer to see and hear from young, attractive and vivacious participants and that the producers might therefore have been justified in their decision.

Many candidates spotted both the use of emotive language in the references to poor care for the elderly in the NHS and also the lack of a direct link between this phenomenon and the shortage of elderly women in prime time television programmes (wrongly identified as a slippery slope by several candidates); both of these were credited as major weaknesses in the reasoning. Many candidates also rightly pointed out that the use of rhetorical questions in Paragraph 2 does not give the reader the choice of disagreeing with the author, and some pointed out that even if it is true that 'We oldies keep the nation going', that does not necessarily imply that old women should be more prominent on television. Some candidates spotted that the strongest support for the claim lay in the analogy with the 'rainbow television industry', although others dismissed this part of the reasoning, on the grounds that race and age are different.

4 Nearly all candidates performed at least fairly well in responding to this question. The two variables in a question of this kind are content and structure.

Nearly all candidates presented some relevant ideas on the subject, but some of them did not go beyond what had been presented in the resource documents and earlier questions. The best strands of reasoning tended to draw on candidates' knowledge of contemporary technology and culture.

A characteristic of the best answers in this exam is always discussion of the key terms used in the claim being considered, and answers which take definitions for granted, rather than questioning them, are unlikely to achieve the highest marks. Definitions were particularly significant in this session, since the concept of 'artwork' and the idea that there can be 'objective records of events' have both been radically challenged and redefined in recent years, but very few candidates engaged with those issues.

Several candidates quoted approvingly the statement by Shaw referred to in Document 3, without apparently realising that Document 3 had shown it to be unrealistic. Conversely, quite a lot of candidates were persuaded by Document 3 (or their own thinking) that photographs can never be objective records of events, because the photographer chooses the vantage point, boundaries, lighting etc, but others perceptively identified security cameras (CCTV) as an example of objective records of events.

Most candidates concluded either that photographs cannot be objective records of events and therefore must be considered to be artworks or that they may be either artworks or objective records of events, depending on the intention of the photographer. The best answers tended to challenge the dichotomy.

Most candidates, albeit not all, presented their answers clearly, allocating one point per paragraph and one paragraph per point, and several ended each paragraph with a summative intermediate conclusion. However, not all of those who presented the individual elements of their answer in this way combined them into a coherent argument. The best answers showed evidence of planning.

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