

GCSE

Humanities

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J445**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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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Unit B031 Cross-curricular Themes

General comments

The paper followed the format used in previous years and expectations were similar. The scripts showed a range of abilities and understanding of the key concepts required for this cross-curricular specification, and many candidates showed a high level of knowledge, incorporating facts from their individual learning to support their arguments.

The a) sections enabled candidates to show their knowledge of the key concepts. The Mark scheme required appropriate facts and one relevant example to illustrate their understanding. These questions were answered very well this year by most candidates.

The b) sections were based on the candidates' ability to extract the required information from the documents. Most were successful in this task, finding the appropriate answer and quoting it in as complete a way as possible. Where some tried to paraphrase the quote, or abbreviate it, their response was often incorrect and so could not be credited.

The c) sections required the candidate to respond at length and in depth. Prompts were provided to supply some structure to their answers, and most students used these successfully. Credit was also given to those students who provided their own information in order to answer the question. Many very good answers showed a combination of both elements. Level 4 responses were expected to show a comprehensive and balanced evaluation of the subject, and top of this level required a developed conclusion which did not simply repeat points already made but extended the discussion.

Question 5 This essay had similar requirements to section c essays (above), but in addition expected candidates to use the documents to support the arguments. Good responses did this effectively but many potentially good answers lacked this link to the documents and so could not gain the additional AO2 marks available.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- ai) Most candidates understood the principles of democracy and could provide relevant examples
- aii) The most frequent example used was North Korea, and there was an obvious understanding of what a 'dictatorship ' means as a system of government.
- bi) & bii) Candidates found the document clear and were able to extract the required information for both elements of this question
- c) This element required specific knowledge about Human Rights and the responsibilities which go with them. Many found this difficult. Although prompts were provided to provide guidance, a lot did not discuss the development of Human Rights and many were confused about the laws relating to them. Many candidates wrote about 'freedom of speech' and the negative results this could have, but other Human Rights were not discussed in many cases, and there was little reference to the 'responsibilities ' aspect of the question.

Question 2

- ai) Although most students knew what a 'contract of employment' was, many linked this to Health and Safety at work which was not required for this question.
- aii) Surprisingly this element caused a lot of confusion, with many candidates writing about 'Fair Trade' or trading between countries.

- bi) Some candidates gave only the table headings eg 'convenience ' variety ' etc. The question clearly asks for 'explanations ' and so these single word answers could not be credited.
- bii) Candidates had little problem finding the concerns about on-line shopping.
- c) This obviously struck a chord with many students and they were able to write in some detail about the benefits and drawbacks of continuing education. Some limited their responses to financial 'costs' and so did not always achieve the higher levels.

Question 3

- ai) Most candidates found few problems providing 3 facts about 'climate change', although some are still confused about the cause of the ozone layer depletion.
- a ii) This proved to be more problematic with a lot of answers talking about 'peer pressure' many did not discuss the pressure put on governments to make changes.
- bi) & ii) Because of the format of Document C, most candidates were able to extract the required information to answer these questions correctly.
- c) The answers were as expected by the Mark scheme, and many candidates wrote at length about how households had contributed to the reduction of carbon emissions, providing relevant examples to support their discussion. Not all responses were linked to the 'carbon footprint ' element of the question.

Question 4

- ai) & ii) Candidates had a lot of knowledge on Rituals, Celebrations, and Religious Festivals, Unfortunately many simply provided 3 examples for each, and only 1 could be credited.
- bi) & ii) This document proved to be more challenging and although most were able to name the two religions which based their attitudes on holy scripture, not all were able to identify two views on which all religions agreed.
- c) Many candidates only gained marks for their discussion of 'what religious people mean by the word 'God'. Those who had an understanding of 'the design argument' and 'the first cause argument' were able to show their knowledge and achieved good marks. It was obvious that a lot of candidates had very little idea of these 'arguments' and their responses were generalised and not sufficiently specific to achieve the higher levels.

Question 5

- ai) 'Tax ' was a frequent incorrect answer to this instead of 'National Insurance '.
- aiii) many tried to paraphrase their response to this and produced an answer which was either incorrect or lacking in the relevant detail.
- aii) & aiv) were answered very well by most candidates
- b) AO1: Many good answers to this provided excellent discussion about the merits and faults of the Welfare State using the prompts and their own knowledge to develop their arguments. Weaker candidates concentrated on the issue of ' idleness ' whether ' forced ' or ' self-inflicted ', but as this was only one aspect of the topic it could not achieve the higher Level. The prompt of ' targeted ' and 'universal' benefits was not clearly understood by many students.
- b) AO2: As In previous years candidates who made use of document F and quoted from it to support the points being made, achieved good marks on this element, however, some extremely good essays did not score too highly because they did not show a link to the document.

Unit B032 Application of Knowledge

General Comments

The paper followed a similar structure to that of last year and the outcomes were the same if not better across the range of abilities.

Extraction questions 1,2,7,8, & 9 were well answered with many obtaining full marks

This paper differs from many others in that answers must be exclusively related to the documents provided. Most candidates showed an awareness of this in their responses, with very few incorporating information which was irrelevant.

Candidates used their knowledge of the various research methods in their answers to questions where appropriate, but this year many gave this information exclusively and did not always link it to the document being discussed, this often prevented higher levels from being reached.

Again the use of generalised terms to describe sources such as 'it is a website' which then led to a statement about websites uses or limitations in general, was a common fault. Information should be specific and related to the particular source involved.

Many used the phrases 'It is significant / valid ' without showing relevance and this type of response too does not earn any credit unless it can be applied to the question under consideration.

Questions 5 & 12 again proved difficult for some candidates as either they only presented one viewpoint, or claimed to present both and did not. They should have an initial plan which selects which information will support each point of view, and use this to construct their response. This should result in a clear indication of the position they are discussing, and will ensure that higher Levels are achieved.

Comments on individual questions

Questions 1 & 2

These were extraction questions and most candidates were able to discover the correct information from the documents. The question was answered very well with many obtaining full marks

Question 3

This too was an extraction question, but many candidates found it more challenging. Whilst they were able to use the statistics from document C, they often did not relate them to the question by showing how they indicated what progress had been made towards reaching the World Bank's goal

Question 4

Many answers focused only on Document B without linking it to Document A. The question related to Human Rights and a large number of candidates failed to make this connection.

Very few achieved the top level because they did not identify the differences between the two documents, nor reach a conclusion as to which document presented the least biased point of view.

Question 5

There was obvious progress in the way candidates answered this question, with many selecting reasons to both agree and disagree with the statement. This resulted in many achieving L3. However the top of Level 3 proved elusive as students did not refer to the provenance of the evidence used to support their arguments.

Question 6

Both elements of this question related to a branch of qualitative research and this appeared to confuse some candidates.

6a This required students to discuss the broad range of methods available when carrying out this type of data collection eg focus groups, participant observation, case studies, shadowing etc. Many simply wrote about 'interviews' which limited the scope of their response considerably. 6b Most candidates answered this very well as they clearly understood the strengths and weaknesses of in-depth interviews. (Even though many of these had been used in answers to 6a, they were still credited here if appropriate).

In both parts of the question however a lot of students continue to use generic terms such as 'reliable' 'biased' 'valid' 'significant' without additional explanation. Often these could not be credited as they were not specifically linked to the question.

Questions 7, 8, 9 & 10

Generally answered well by extracting relevant information from the documents

Question 11

In the past, the main criticism of the way this question is tackled is that candidates focus only on the face-value information provided in the document without discussing its provenance or utility. This year many candidates provided this information, but failed to discuss what the document said and explain how far this was useful / limited for research into the uneven development in LEDCs. The mark scheme allows 2 marks to be awarded for each of these (as in previous years) but many failed to earn the easier of the 4 marks.

Level 3 was not reached by many students because they did not identify the weakness of using only one account, or suggest that comparing it with possible alternative views would increase its strength.

Question 12

Again many answers were more focused on the nature of the sources rather than on their content, and as only 3 out of a possible 10 marks were allocated to this element of their response, some candidates scored lower than their expected mark.

As last year a lot of answers only provided one viewpoint which can achieve only L2 maximum for this element.

Where both aspects were discussed, some candidates scored highly, producing a balanced treatment of the statement, and basing their arguments on the information contained in all of the documents D,E & F (Although some did try to incorporate documents A, B, & C into their discussion too), and comparing the utility of these documents in an attempt to formulate a personal conclusion.

Unit B033 Controlled Assessment

General Comments:

This year's entry showed candidates choosing a narrow range of topics, notably Animal Testing and Contributions to healthcare costs for smokers and drug-related conditions. 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. More able candidates drew on a wide range of specific evidence, often signposted precisely.

AO3a: Research Methodology.

This was a strong area for many centres. Candidates were very clear about which methods they had chosen and why, and in some cases, research terminology was accurately used. Many candidates produced a questionnaire/survey which produced some interesting data. It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates supplemented their secondary sources in this way. Unfortunately, some useful data was overlooked and not fully exploited.

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. Some candidates relied heavily on articles from newspapers without realising there may have been some bias in these, or a purpose other than simply providing information.

AO3c: Record and present findings.

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 this. In a number of enquiries, there was little written work generated by the candidate; the data was presented in graphs/tables with a little descriptive comment. Some consideration should be given to the use of appendices, and raw data would logically be placed there. This then allows the word count to be used for explanation and analysis.

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. This was particularly problematic where candidates had used media sources, particularly online news sources.

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 should have a clear understanding of different methodologies and what these are likely to produce must relate this to their own research enquiry.

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