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Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Tuesday 24 May 2016 – Afternoon

AS GCE CRITICAL THINKING

F502/01/RB Assessing and Developing Argument

F502/02/RB

RESOURCE BOOKLET

To be issued with the Question Paper

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Use the Resource Booklet to answer all the questions in Section B and Section C.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- The information contained in this Resource Booklet was accurate when it went to press, but may subsequently have changed. Questions should be answered on the basis that the information is correct.
- This document consists of **2** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Throwaway Society

Our clothes and consumer goods, like televisions and washing machines, are getting cheaper and we are buying more and more of them. Our habit of buying more products, buying them more cheaply and then throwing them away has been criticised and labelled the “throwaway society”. But the throwaway society should not be condemned.

1

Technology, products and fashion are developing quickly and it does not make sense to pay extra for something which will last longer when it will soon be out of date. The average contract for a mobile phone lasts for 18 months and customers expect a new handset with each new contract. Just as you would not expect to have the same phone for more than a couple of years, because there will be better ones on the market by then, so there is no point in borrowing money to buy one expensive designer coat or suit when it will be out of date by the time you have finished paying for it.

2

Companies themselves are encouraging the throwaway society by manufacturing lower cost, less repairable products. The consumer group, *Which?*, found that in 1970–71 the cost of a washing machine was roughly 8% of the 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 chances of a washing machine breaking down in its first six years is now just 12%. It is unfair to judge people for buying the products companies sell.

3

Recently the House of Lords Committee on Science and Technology criticised the rising popularity of high street clothes which are so inexpensive that there is no incentive to mend them. The Committee said these cheaper clothes are often made from low-quality fabrics which wear out quickly and are hard to recycle. This means they end up in landfill. However, every year 12.5% of discarded clothing is given to charities. This evidence shows that having cheaper clothes is not preventing people from reusing and recycling them. It also supports charitable causes, which it is our duty to do.

4

We live in a society that no longer has a “make do and mend” attitude. Most people do not know how to repair their clothes, cars or electrical products anyway. If the government wanted to stop the throwaway society, schools would teach children how to darn socks, sew on buttons and fix washing machines.

5

There are concerns about how our throwaway society is encouraging people to spend their way into debt. However, our throwaway society makes economic sense. Consumers in the UK spend about £780 per person per year on clothing. This is allowing the clothing industry in the UK to thrive in difficult financial times. Additionally, the government gains money from the purchase of goods because customers pay value added tax (VAT) on them. The country benefits from this. If people are encouraged to spend less, the government will receive less tax, meaning that we will no longer be able to afford to provide free education and free health care.

6

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