

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/11

Paper 11

Key Messages

- answer the question as set and respond to the key words
- reinforce your main points with relevant examples
- allow time for a thorough and systematic check of grammar, spelling and expression

General comments

A good number of detailed and thorough responses responded to the question as set and presented a good range of relevant examples to illustrate their main points. A sizeable number of responses contained few and occasionally, no illustration, resulting in vague, generalised arguments that lacked credibility and conviction.

Candidates should always react to the prompts in the set question and maintain focus throughout on the key words. Successful candidates made good use of their topic knowledge and were able to include appropriate examples to support their ideas. The majority of Centres returned a reasonable number of high scoring answers; however, unfortunately, a few Centres were not able to meet that standard

Most candidates used the time wisely and were able to assemble their thoughts in well-constructed paragraphs and expressed themselves with due clarity. Quite a few candidates used the introduction to give an unnecessary and sometimes lengthy history/ background of the topic instead of focusing immediately on the wording of the question and exploring the arising issues. Some conclusions merely listed points from the main body of the essay, rather than drawing out a final conclusion stating a clear, personal point of view.

The following points embracing Use of English, essay technique and content are presented in bullet points style in the expectation that this will make them easier for candidates to remember.

- several Examiners commented that handwriting was sometimes hard to read
- a small number of candidates need to plan their essay more carefully so that the content is clearer and more logically organised
- most essays followed recommendations for length
- candidates need to focus on answering the question as set and not include everything they know about a previously rehearsed topic
- ensure that main points are fully developed and appropriately illustrated
- candidates should leave sufficient time towards the end of the examination to run a thorough and systematic check of the English to correct any careless errors
- candidates should always endeavour to adopt an appropriately formal style to match the content of the essay and should avoid becoming 'chatty'

Use of English

Use of English Marks can be needlessly lost through basic errors, examples of which are listed below:

- subject/verb non-agreement
- Use of informal vocabulary such as 'kinda', 'gotta', 'kids'
- The use of the clichéd phrase 'In a nutshell' should be avoided as it is colloquial and not appropriate formal English
- missing endings on plural nouns because of carelessness and/or poor checking
- using incorrect plural instead of singular words: electricities, behaviours, informations and technologies instead of electricity, behaviour, information and technology
- the pronoun 'one' cannot be followed by 'they'/'their'

- frequent incorrect use of definite and indefinite articles
- confusion between their/there, to/too, here/hear, crisis/crises and practice/practise
- incorrect use of apostrophes e.g. its/it's
- incorrect comparative forms such as more easier/more richer/more harder
- incorrect use of commas leading to loss and/or ambiguity of meaning
- words not separated e.g. 'alot' 'infact' 'aswell'

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

An extremely low number of responses to this question which did not even approach the requirements of the question.

Question 2

Quite a popular question which elicited responses that included several shocking examples of police brutality. This question appealed across the whole ability range and consequently there was considerable variety in the quality of the responses. The better answers from developing countries were critical of the police for corruption and low rates of crime solving but did acknowledge low pay, inadequate training and a lack of modern equipment and resources, such as police vehicles, as a major obstacle to more effective performance. Less successful answers described typical crimes in their locality but did not really discuss police action in response in any depth.

Question 3

Again an extremely low number of answers to this question which did not really explain the importance of the 'grey' buying power.

Question 4

Not an overly popular question. Most candidates presented a balanced, well-reasoned discussion to indicate why any progressive state should assist those in need, particularly when difficult economic conditions prevail and providing measures are in place to prevent fraud and abuse. They also addressed the prompt of 'How far....?' It was felt that a society should ultimately be judged by the way it safeguards its most vulnerable. However, answers from some Centres were vehemently opposed to the state 'giving money away' to anybody; but these answers tended to be very assertive and did not look at the weakest in society in any depth. A few candidates confused 'social security' with national security and therefore digressed from the set question.

Question 5

A reasonably popular choice. Better candidates showed good knowledge across a wide range of different sports and provided examples and illustration of rule-breaking, corruption and varieties of cheating and foul play. Much of this unwelcome lack of the true Olympic spirit was attributed to the desire to win by hook or by crook. This unfair attitude was deemed to stem from the greed for money, the influence of betting syndicates and a decline in moral standards. Golf was singled out as one of the last bastions of fair play and compliance with the rules. Weaker answers concentrated on one or two sports and provided very little illustration.

Question 6

Not many answers to this question. As expected, candidates were concerned about potential environmental issues, although very few discussed the risks of drilling for gas, as compared with oil, and fracking. Some felt that the possible problems arising from drilling could be avoided by extended use of renewables. However, no candidate seemed aware of the huge amounts of energy required to sustain our present lifestyle.

Question 7

Not very popular. Most of those who chose this question seemed unaware of the controversy amongst experts regarding the reality of global warming as depicted by Al Gore's doomsday scenario and the IPCC's flawed report. They therefore tended to agree with the claim that 'the science is settled.'

Question 8

This question was quite a popular choice with Centres in developed countries but not so with others. Pill popping was seen as an instant fix to a variety of trivial and serious conditions in many societies. Candidates were alive to the perils of over-reliance on pills being transformed into a dangerous addiction and discussed more beneficial alternatives such as a controlled diet and a far healthier lifestyle.

Question 9

A very popular question which was often answered at least satisfactorily. The best answers pointed out both the benefits and the drawbacks or even inherent dangers of Internet-based friendships in some depth and provided appropriate examples to support the main points. It was also shown to be a generation issue, generally embraced by the young but largely ignored and misunderstood by the older generation.

Question 10

Moderately popular. Many candidates saw this as man's next giant step forward in transport technology but still harboured doubts about safety and astronomical costs. It was generally considered as rather premature at the moment either to welcome or reject it. A few felt that the huge amounts of money involved could be put to better immediate use such as investing in research to prevent fatal diseases.

Question 11

commonplace. These candidates simply did not look carefully enough at the question and turned distraction into destruction i.e. not what key message 1 recommends. However, there were a number of good responses where candidates focused on the time wasted watching television when there were far more important things to be done. These answers also demonstrated how family discussions seldom took place even at meal times because one or more family members preferred to watch some programme. Others also made the link between lack of exercise thanks to all-day programming and obesity and other health issues.

Question 12

Not many answers to this rather straightforward question but it was often quite well done. Candidates nominated the foreign culture of their choice and offered credible and sometimes interesting reasons for doing so.

Question 13

I cannot recall seeing one attempt at this question.

Question 14

Very few responses to this question. Opinions were divided. Some felt that 3D added little or even nothing to a film but was a money-making racket by the production studio because cinema goers have to pay extra for their seats. Others thought that the 3D experience did really add a new, exciting dimension to certain action films and offered examples in support of their views

Question 15

Very few attempted this question and it was not always well answered as most candidates struggled with the concept of 'anything you can get away with.' A minority did discuss how some movements such as minimalist art seemed frivolous and of little value to the layman and gave examples of prizes being awarded for works of art which baffled the general public.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/12

Paper 12

General Comments

This is a demanding paper. It requires candidates to compose two essays in the relatively short time of two hours. As in all examinations there are variations in the quality of response but candidates deserve recognition for, with hardly any exception, completing two essays in the given timeframe. Many of these responses were fluent, showing a genuine engagement with the topics chosen.

In selecting the questions to answer most candidates wrote from a sure knowledge base. Questions requiring knowledge of history, fashion, culture, entertainment, tend to be popular so Centres are encouraged to devote some time to enriching their candidates' appreciation of the Arts in general. Naturally not all of the Arts will be included in a given question paper but many of them, including music, art, theatre, and literature explore social and personal matters that apply to all of us.

Candidates often respond to questions where knowledge of their own locality is required, for example local economic conditions, transport efficiency, or matters concerning consumer rights. Such topics require as much evaluation and debate as any other question and there is evidence that Centres are encouraging discussion rather than the mere recounting of facts and figures.

On the question paper words and phrases like 'how', 'how far', 'discuss', 'give reasons', 'what do you understand', 'to what extent', indicate that there may be points in favour of or against a viewpoint or assertion. They are being asked to evaluate, to weigh things up, and then come to a conclusion. Centres may want to encourage candidates, particularly on controversial issues, to reveal their own views and opinions while not neglecting to acknowledge the existence of other attitudes. Questions related to scientific, medical and technological developments can be approached in a spirit of enquiry without sacrificing one's own beliefs.

Finally it is clear that Centres and candidates are very concerned with what is correct, or acceptable, in the use of English. The errors listed in previous reports still occur but in only a few instances did the incidence of error impede understanding. The majority of the technical inaccuracies seen were grammatical ones to do with such features as sentence structure, mixing of tenses and uncertainty over the use of definite and indefinite articles. Above all it is important that candidates communicate with the reader. They should make themselves known to the reader and let their personality shine through in what they write. Then, even a candidate who struggles with the mechanics of English will communicate. It is encouraging to see that candidates are spending some time on the design of their essays. A rough plan or scheme is all that is needed to ensure that the essay has shape. If there is time to revise what is written, look out in particular for unnecessary words or phrases, for example prepositions that are serving no purpose. Avoid as far as possible overstatement, exaggeration, and the use of elaborate words for their own sake. Write as plainly and accurately as you can and avoid at all costs formulaic introductions and conclusions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

This was a challenging and very specific question. Only a handful of responses were seen and those that chose to respond on levels of confidence in financial institutions were well informed on the topic.

Question 2

This was a fairly popular question but many candidates did not understand the meaning of 'consumer awareness'. Essays were too generalised and what the government should do to make citizens' lives better was the only concern. A few candidates questioned the role of government in these matters, arguing for individual responsibility and voicing strong opposition to the encroachment of the state. These answers were interesting. There are often opportunities for not taking a given question at face value and where candidates interrogate the assumptions that seem to be implicit in a question they can do very well so long as they are sure of their ground. A few candidates confused the term 'consumer awareness' with encouraging consumption. Others allowed themselves to be diverted into answering the question they would rather have been doing: a discourse on the perils of smoking. It's invariably a mistake to let a single issue dominate.

Question 3

There were only a few responses to this question and those who did respond wrote mainly about the products which young people like buying such as iPads. Better responses avoided the catalogue approach and remembered the need for evaluation if marks in the higher bands are to be accessed. There was some analysis of under-21 disposable income and the relative cost of popular goods and services.

Question 4

The more successful candidates were able to illustrate examples of organised tyrannies, such as those of Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, and those that prevailed in the Middle East before the coming of the Arab Spring. Interesting responses also reflected on the limitations of the democratic system, even arguing quite ingeniously that autocracy can have aspects both benign and efficient that democracy by its very nature cannot have. Others argued perceptively, using the wording of the question intelligently, that though tyrannies might 'always' be 'better organised' that is no good reason to tolerate them.

Question 5

This was a very popular topic and generally very effectively handled with reference to particular controversies. There was some lack of focus evident in exemplifying 'scandals' as distinct from mere controversies. Surprisingly there was limited reference made to Olympic ideals but there were many appropriate references made to the corruptive influence of commercialisation and gambling. Drug-taking was also a major area of concern. The best responses not only considered actual examples of recent scandals but also discussed the idea of integrity in sport.

Section 2

Question 6

Answers to Medical Research almost all acknowledged the debt owed by society in the eradication and treatment of certain diseases, and showed awareness of the problems of 'animal testing'. Other methods of testing were not too widely covered, though there was mention of the possible use of technology. There were some very creditable responses with most candidates favouring limitation because of financial cost, religious/ethical objections to the use of animals as test-subjects and particular developments in IVF and genetic engineering. Overall the answers were quite sophisticated and not too dogmatic. This proved to be a popular question and those who explored the implications of the key phrase 'no limits whatsoever' did well.

Question 7

Many answered this question and all the candidates had wide-ranging knowledge of their local transport infrastructure. Where deficiencies were highlighted there was considerable discussion about the causes, such as low government funding and what could be done about it. Several answers painted vivid pictures of local conditions and this made reading the responses a pleasure. Responses to questions of this type need to be enlivened. It was heartening to note that many managed to turn what might have been dull into lively, often colourful and informed accounts and evaluations of their local scenes.

Question 8

A few candidates attempted this question. They wrote capably about scientific developments and the removal of superstition but found it difficult to discriminate between awe and mystery in their responses. There were too many generalised essays about what mankind has achieved through science. It is a mistake

