

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 9777/01
Written Paper

Key messages

- Candidates should focus on the wording of the question.
- Candidates should assess and evaluate both strengths and weaknesses of the documents, not simply describe them.

General comments

Candidates who read the documents carefully and depended only on the content of the arguments tended to give more accurate and focused answers.

Candidates who wrote full answers to **Questions 2 and 3** showed that they had engaged well with the documents.

The least successful candidates did not read all questions carefully and/or answered a different question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates who answered concisely, or with three simply explained points, covered the requirements adequately but did not spend too much time on their answer.

Candidates were able to give reasons and/or explanations to achieve full marks.

Those candidates who re-wrote the argument in their own words, or discussed their own thoughts on the topic, did not identify or explain enough reasons.

Question 2

Candidates who read the question carefully and answered fully and thoughtfully had the most success in their answers. They assessed a range of aspects of the document, including the content of the argument, its language, coherence, cohesion and structure and the credibility of the author. Each point made was illustrated with reference to the text and evaluated in terms of its impact on the argument and/or the reader. Successful evaluation was developed and explained and the candidate came to an overall, explained judgement.

Successful answers made a series of explicit judgements, justified by the detail provided, such as:

'... Furthermore, although examples of illegal content are given in the 4th paragraph, the significance and scale of the offensive, illegal content cannot be concluded as no supporting evidence is given. For example, the degree of accessibility of "pornography" is not considered and this arguably is a substantial flaw as no evidence is given either. This lack of evidence is a clear weakness of document 1'.

Less successful answers tended to depend on vague assertions with gaps in their logic, or possibly valid evaluative comment with no supporting reference to the text, such as:

'Throughout the document 1 the author evaluates and considers counter arguments. This makes his argument stronger as it allows the reader to come to their own conclusions.'

With no illustration of this evaluative point, via reference to the text, this is a generalised point, could refer to any text and cannot be credited as an evaluation of the argument. The candidate must provide evidence from the text to support their assertion that the author evaluates and considers counter arguments.

Question 3

Candidates who answered the question fully had the most success in their answers. They read the documents carefully to identify where the arguments were similar/different in strength/weakness and where they were more/less convincing.

As in **Question 2** those candidates who developed justified evaluative points and illustrated them with reference to both documents had most success. They chose a range of points of challenge between the documents, included comparison and/or contrast and balanced the strengths and weaknesses of the challenge over their whole answer.

The strongest answers considered *at least* two strengths and two weaknesses: identified, fully explained, illustrated, compared and their impact on the argument and/or the reader evaluated.

They explicitly evaluated each point for both documents, comparing them and drawing a supported conclusion on whether Document 2 was more or less convincing as a result of this strength or weakness. They evaluated common strengths and/or weaknesses in order to fully compare the documents.

Strong answers considered a range of aspects, including content of the two arguments, evidence, cohesion, structure and language, coherence and credibility of the authors. Their evaluation was explicit and they made an overall detailed judgement.

Some weaker answers concentrated only on Document 2, with no real reference to Document 1. Others included material which, though correct, was not a part of either document and so could not be used to assess how convincing the arguments were.

The weakest answers tended to list a few strengths and/or weaknesses of Document 2 with little reference to Document 1 and concluded that it was more/less convincing argument, without much supporting evidence or explanation.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Paper 9777/02
Essay

Key messages

The key messages from this series are:

- Most candidates successfully explored two contrasting perspectives related to a global issue
- Candidates are presenting relevant evidence clearly and with appropriate structure
- Reflection on personal learning should be strengthened
- Candidates should evaluate their own work in greater detail.

General comments

For most candidates, the research into the issue was reasonably comprehensive and two contrasting perspectives were explored in some detail. Essays which explored the main issues successfully in appropriate width and depth tended to use between 10–15 sources in total, with about 6–8 of these being discussed at some length.

Successful essays were logically structured with a clear proposal or claim about the issue. This was supported by an analysis and evaluation of the arguments and evidence associated with two perspectives on the issue. These essays tended to base their conclusions on personal reflection and substantial evaluation of the strengths and limitations of their own research, as well as the review of the perspectives. The conclusion was convincing, supported and balanced, as well as providing a clear answer to the question in the title.

Higher quality essays usually had evaluative rather than descriptive titles, framed as a clear question with at least two different perspectives implied. An example of a good title was, 'Should we continue to develop Artificial Intelligence?' or 'Does Globalisation lead to an increase in nationalist sentiment?'

Inappropriate titles tended to be descriptive or local in emphasis, for example, 'In what ways are we a multicultural society?' or, 'To what extent does the internet affect relationships?' Some candidates failed to choose an issue of global significance and were therefore restricted in the marks that could be awarded.

In general, the research for the essays was completed well and many candidates used a good range of sources, usually gathered from the internet. The selection of sources and evidence was good and clearly relevant to the issue and perspectives being assessed.

Many candidates are learning to reflect upon the implications of research into global issues for their own personal beliefs, values and lifestyle. Candidates are also gaining in confidence in writing about their own learning and research. However, this is an area that could be developed further to raise levels of achievement.

To improve levels of achievement, candidates should also be encouraged to:

- avoid assertion without explanation and evidence;
- refer to strengths and weaknesses when evaluating reasoning and evidence;
- include fully explained suggestions for further research;

Comments on specific tasks

In this section of the Report some further guidance is given to centres on how to improve the quality of the essays.

1 Evaluation

Candidates are expected to demonstrate evaluation skills in the essay. This includes evaluation of:

- arguments and evidence supporting each of the main perspectives being explored on the issue;
- arguments and evidence for each of the main sources being used to illustrate or describe the perspectives;
- research methodology within sources;
- their own research
- their own personal perspectives and learning;
- the strengths and limitations of the conclusions.

Candidates should be given opportunities to analyse and evaluate sources and perspectives, as well as past examples of essays, as a central part of the course.

Many candidates only describe the sources. Some evaluate fully without using the argument and evidence within the perspectives and sources to develop their own argument. It is helpful for the candidate to describe and apply the content of the source to the essay title and global issue as part of an overall argument to support a claim about the issue in question.

Candidates should think about potential bias, vested interest, weaknesses in the methodology, the credibility of arguments, sample sizes, expertise, validity and reliability and accuracy. The tone of language and clarity of argument might also be assessed by candidates.

2 Reflection and personal learning

Candidates should devote about one or two paragraphs to describing and explaining how the process of research and exploration of the global issue has affected their own personal perspectives and beliefs about the issue. This might include:

- a description of their main learning points about the issue
- a description of their main learning points about conducting research
- changes to or reinforcement of their own beliefs and values
- implications for their own behaviour or lifestyle.

Candidates should be encouraged to provide evidence to justify their reflections and judgements. This may take a range of different forms, including examples, incidents, quotations from sources or data gathered through primary research that were influential, notes from research diaries or course logs, extracts from discussions about the issue, and reference to authors who have been convincing and shaped their views. An example of weak reflection is:

“Artificial intelligence was interesting and very relevant to my interest in new technologies and robots. Before I thought that there was no danger from artificial intelligence. Now I think that we should be worried because they can really think for themselves.”

This example reflects very simply by describing their views after the work has been completed. There is no attempt to explain the reasons for any change or their implications.

A much better example of reflection is:

“At the start of the Global Perspectives research I thought that artificial intelligence was impossible for scientists to create and just a myth sensationalised by the media to sell their products. For example, headlines in tabloid newspapers like, ‘Robots Cured my Grandmother’, tended to oversimplify the debate in my opinion. However, I have learnt from experts in the field, like Professor Jane Smith, that artificial intelligence is already here. This can be seen in driverless cars and the way computers can analyse ‘deep data’ to predict our consumer behaviour and diagnose illnesses. (Wright, 2017). I see that artificial

intelligence can create new opportunities for employment and improve our lives, not least by using resources more efficiently and sustainably.

Although my research explored two examples of artificial intelligence, I cannot be certain that the conclusion I have reached applies to the future. Rapid change makes prediction from current trends very difficult. In addition, there are so many new ways to use and develop AI that it is not possible to generalise with confidence. More research is necessary, as I describe below.”

This example of reflection describes and explains several learning points from the research which are applied to the context of the essay, including reference to some supporting evidence. The reflection and review of the conclusion is then used to explain and justify some possible further research. Personal reflection often leads to the recognition that learning can be deeper and that work can be improved. An important part of reflection for the essay is therefore to identify aspects of the global issue or perspectives that could be better understood through further research.

However, this part of the essay is often omitted completely or treated superficially.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Paper 9777/03
Presentation

Key messages

- Candidates should focus on key concepts as well as perspectives
- The ability to synthesise sources is a marker of higher level work
- Developed conclusions allow candidates to demonstrate support from argument and evidence
- Questions should clearly demonstrate a debate between perspectives.

General comments

The pre-release material, in common with that of previous series, consisted of a major topic, making up the majority of the documents and a contrasting minor one. This time, the major topic was urbanisation, concerned with the growth of mega-cities, and the minor one was the debate over fossil fuels, contrasting the approaches of Western capitalism and the Asian world. All candidates chose to focus on mega-cities and used those documents as the starting point for their research.

The strongest presentations focused on a key concept, with social inequality being a popular choice. This enabled the construction of a clear debate in relation to public policy and the development of mega-cities. These presentations also considered mega-cities in more than one national context, allowing for a global range, whilst being firmly based in one or more of the pre-release documents as a starting point.

Candidate arguments were also clearly sequenced, with each stage linked by discourse markers such as: *"Before I begin to answer this question, it is necessary to first explain the extent to which inequality is a widespread issue in 2017. ... This therefore begs the question, should governments intervene to create more just and equal societies, or should policy makers continue to turn a blind eye to inequality in order to maintain economic growth and national prosperity?"*

In this candidate's statement, the words "before" and "therefore" clearly signpost stages of the argument and set up the debate in explicit terms early on.

Another characteristic feature of the strongest presentations was the ability to synthesise sources, making specific comparisons and contrasts between each of the arguments in each perspective. The following extract from a successful presentation shows this in operation, as the candidate shows how different arguments support one another:

"In Document 2, 'The rise of the megacity', Quinn outlines some of the benefits of megacities such as higher wages, more opportunities and better access to education. Her viewpoints are supported by individuals such as Andre Sorensen, chair of the University of Toronto's human geography department, and Somik Lall, the World Bank's lead urban economist. However, she also states that issues - such as crime, squalor and disease - can arise if the cities are not well managed. As Lall points out and Quinn includes in her conclusion, "So while the density of cities is really good, if not well managed, it could be very problematic"

The more successful conclusions were developed at length, making specific links with the concepts, arguments, perspectives and evidence in the body of the presentation. Where presentations were less effective overall, their questions tended to be either speculative:

"Will transport congestion eventually prevent the growth of megacities socially?"

or factual:

“Has the rise of megacities led to an increase in the prevalence of disease?”

In both cases, these questions ask for information (either on what has happened or will happen) and make it harder for candidates to produce a meaningful debate between multiple perspectives.

Where questions did not give rise to clearly defined alternative perspectives, candidates tended to contrast alternative arguments which were not clearly organised into opposing points of view. This limited the credit they could be awarded. Nonetheless, sources were often clearly selected, if not synthesised, and it was only where sources were only quoted or mentioned, rather than being actively considered, that presentations were less successful.

In general, where candidates presented a research-based, clearly structured debate between opposing perspectives and reached a supported judgement, successful results were achieved.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Paper 9777/04
Independent Research Report

Key messages

- Make sure that critical thinking techniques in the broadest sense are used to assess evidence
- Ensure that reflection on the research process is always undertaken as part of the journey along the Critical Path.

General comments

Reports which showed an awareness that the IRR was a chance to use and develop the critical skills developed in GP were the most successful. The element of evaluation and judgement was not always sufficiently developed and the marking did always not make sufficient distinction between the use of evidence, the analysis of different sources and the key skill of assessing the evidence in relation to a sustained discussion of different perspectives. While some reports provided good explanations of issues within the chosen subject they did not meet the requirements of the mark scheme enough to justify the marks awarded.

AO1 In general, the marks awarded were fairly consistent with the analysis of the research process by centre markers. The IRR monitoring form was generally completed in a careful way and the qualities recorded were generally translated accurately into marks.

AO2 This deals with the analysis and assessment of research materials. There was not always sufficient attention paid to the requirement that ‘critical thinking techniques’ should be used to evaluate evidence. In some cases the use of a literature review meant that there was a lot of description of evidence but the analysis of it was too limited to be worth the higher marks often awarded. **AO2** is intended to assess how the critical approach developed in the first three papers of Global Perspectives (GP) is applied to personal research and to a wider range of evidence. The explanation of the evidence and the use of sources in argument without any critical evaluation should not be over rewarded. Neither should evaluation which relies on comments about the origin of the evidence, especially when using academic studies. There was some tendency for basic ad hominem comment to be over used as a means of assessing evidence.

AO3 In some cases there was very little attempt to reflect on personal research in a meaningful way so the impression was of a project rather than a contextualised demonstration of higher level thinking skills, which needed developed reflection on methodology and evidence as part of the Critical Path process that underpins the whole qualification.

AO4 Communication was often strong in itself, with an impressive mastery of some technical vocabulary and some well-focused writing that had obviously been carefully reviewed by the learners. However marking should consider how well the candidates' 'own argument' had been communicated.

AO5 Intellectual challenge. This is something that does need to be considered at the initial planning stage. Reports do not have to be mini PhD thesis or involve very complex specialist material. However, if the subject is relatively straightforward, the evidence undemanding and the approach limited to explaining different views, then the opportunities for demonstrating a response to intellectual challenge may be too limited. However, importing complex philosophical views into straightforward subject matter is not the way forward here. If Utilitarianism or Marxism interests a learner then these ideas could be the subject of a report. However to introduce them into a topic for which they have limited reference is unhelpful. There may be a Utilitarian view of drug use in athletics but long excursions into moral philosophy may be strained and out of place.

It was clear that some learners would have benefited from submitting an Outline Proposal Form (OPF) so that they could have responded to feedback on whether their questions offered the chance to look at different perspectives and also whether their proposed approach and the sources they had chosen seemed appropriate to the topic. In some cases it was clear that there was a mismatch between the actual question and the analysis offered or that the question offered limited chances for sustained discussion, something that was apparent from the start. These issues could have been addressed through the submission of an OPF.

There were some very well focused answers which received appropriate credit for sustained analysis and evaluation and were evidence driven. However, there were some descriptive responses which did not engage with the assessment of evidence or different perspectives and which were over credited by centres. There were also answers which showed a great deal of hard work and personal research but were not showing the skills needed.

Whatever the outcome, the process of extended research is one of the most valuable preparations for future study. One element that was apparent from the work seen which is common to previous series is the obvious engagement of many learners with their chosen topic and the high level of commitment to producing mature and well informed writing. If that can be combined with the progress along the Critical Path then a variety of very worthwhile education objectives can be met.