

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/12
Written Exam

Key messages

Candidates should ensure they read the paper carefully, looking at the key words, in order to answer the questions set. This was particularly relevant in **Question 2** where several candidates evaluated the argument rather than the evidence as required in the question.

The length of the answer should reflect the number of marks available. Several candidates spent too long on **Questions 1** and **2** leaving insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3** which was worth almost half of the available marks.

The key skill, particularly in **Question 3**, needed to score high marks is that of comparative evaluation, supported by precise reference to the passage and in relation to the question set.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content. This was to evaluate the provenance, perspectives and argument to reach an overall judgement regarding the extent to which the argument of the author of Document 2 was more convincing than that of the author in Document 1.

Candidates should refer to the document by giving brief and relevant details to support their evaluation of evidence and argument. Otherwise the answer is too generalised containing no more than a series of assertions or claims. This is crucial in **Questions 2** and **3** in order to attain higher marks. In particular, candidates should avoid using unexplained technical terms.

Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without reference, except in **Question 1(a)** and part of **1(b)** will not gain credit.

In **Question 3**, the strongest responses reached a supported judgement about the convincing nature of the author's argument in Document 2 compared to that in Document 1.

General comments

The overall standard of the responses was encouraging with candidates being well prepared. There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the passages and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. There were several candidates who did not pay careful enough attention to the command words in the questions and this limited the level they achieved, particularly in **Question 2**.

It is encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher level skill by comparing the argument put forward in the passages in **Question 3** and coming to a judgement. However, some simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the argument of the authors.

In **Question 2** several candidates concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument rather than the evidence used to support it. It is important to carefully read, and understand, the question. Although evidence was usually mentioned it was not the focus of the answer and so higher marks were not accessible.

There was little evidence of candidates running out of time, although the allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. The answers to **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)** can be concise. Recognising this can allow more time for the more challenging (and higher mark) **Questions 2** and **3**.

Sometimes answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise reference to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents demonstrating that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being considered and reached a supported judgement concerning the convincing nature, if any, of the argument in Document 2 relative to that in Document 1.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Only **brief** statements were required. For this 'identify' question information could be copied directly from the text.

Typically, candidates could achieve the two available marks by referring to: 'globalisation of communication, e.g. social media' and 'greater political openness of countries'. There was no need to write extensively.

- (b) The question required the candidates to explain the two opposing ways of dealing with the problem of migration. Those scoring full marks used a basic explanation for each way and then developed it fully, using their own expression but based on the reasoning of the author.

Some candidates simply copied out the reasoning that the author had used but this did not explain the opposing ways. It was possible to gain up to one mark for each appropriate simple explanation in this way, but the additional mark required a more personal and developed explanation.

Examples of good practice: *'The creation of a physical geographical barrier (basic explanation), such as a fence is one way. This method directly hinders people from moving from one country to another, thereby reducing immigration.'* (Fuller Explanation)

'The author suggests providing temporary programs for people from poor countries that will lead to a more effective and stabilised progression towards migration (management) (Enhanced basic explanation). The author suggests changing from an ethnocentric, national view to a global view to welcome new workers with potential rather than shutting them out.' (Full Explanation)

Question 2

It was important in **Question 2** to read the requirements of the question carefully. The highest scoring candidates addressed strengths and weaknesses of the evidence and related this to how it supported the author's argument in Document 1. However, some candidates did not recognise the need to address the evidence used and instead evaluated the strength and weakness of the argument. Although these candidates used some evidence in their answer, frequently the emphasis of the answer was towards argument so, for many, higher level marks were not able to be achieved. This has been identified in reports in other series and remains an area for improvement.

For strengths of the evidence, high scoring candidates used examples like: *'One strength of the evidence is that it is relevant to the argument being made. Comparisons like "10 to 1" and "50 to 1" use quantitative data to ensure the intermediate conclusion of "higher economic growth" is well justified. Secondly, there is good use of sources. The "US New Immigrant Survey" is likely to be a reputable government source with an interest in printing statistically correct data.'* This clearly reviewed the evidence used and related it directly to the question posed.

For weaknesses of the evidence, high scoring candidates used examples like: *'While the author does take information from Professor Andrew Clarke and Claudia Senik and mentions they are researchers (a partial strength), no information is provided regarding their qualifications or the type of research they did which weakens the evidence of the article.'* This showed a good understanding of the limitations of the sources of the evidence and the consequent lack of reliability.

There appeared, in several cases, to be an expectation that the question would refer to the strength and weaknesses of the argument and a formulaic approach adopted. Explanation of such aspects as: the credibility of the author (only relevant in their ability to select appropriate evidence), the range of arguments and the use of language, were erroneously used in this context. However, many candidates were able, even in the context of evaluating argument, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the evidence.

Question 3

The standard of responses to this question overall, showed that candidates were well prepared to compare the relative convincing nature of the argument of the author in Document 2.

There were two main approaches used to answer this question.

The first approach was rare, but it aimed to discuss the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempt to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgement as to which, if any, was more convincing. This approach was only partially successful as the more difficult evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope. This approach also encouraged candidates to give much narrative description, in particular, extensively quoting from what the authors **stated** rather than undertaking evaluation of the nature of the argument. This limited the marks gained.

An example of stating information and simply comparing information from the document without development is:

'Park (Doc 2)'s solution states that "there is strong evidence that climate risk management techniques could have worked in Africa and these should have been introduced as early as 2007 before the drought problem that caused widespread famine in the Horn of Africa."

This does not show evaluation of the arguments; it just shows what the author stated. To gain higher marks it would be necessary to use evidence/details from the documents to evaluate why the author came to make that statement.

The second approach, and by far most frequent, was to directly compare the two documents throughout the answer. The best candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative convincing nature of each approach. There was no correct answer and candidates could, and did, argue that Document 1 or Document 2 was more convincing than the other or that both were equally convincing. Those scoring lower marks tended to directly compare the content of the passages without evaluating relative strengths. Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument, e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of documents while lower scorers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without referencing examples. Other lower scoring answers were frequently superficial and relied on underdeveloped quotes from the text as in the example above.

Some candidates evaluated the theme of the argument in terms of their own opinion of migration. This is not appropriate as the question requires evaluation of the author's arguments.

The higher scoring candidates used the second method as they could methodically evaluate the relative strengths of the argument, using appropriate examples, before coming to a reasoned judgement at the end.

'Park (Doc 2) uses a local example of Ahmed Abdullah which shows first-hand experience of the problem and thus makes the argument more convincing. Using first-hand examples also adds emotional value to the argument that makes it more convincing. However, Document 1 is more convincing in the aspect of the global examples it uses. Document 1 uses more examples of countries with different degrees of economic development, while Document 2 only focusses on poor countries like Syria and countries in Africa.'

This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of argument of the authors in relation to the geographical perspective of the two documents. It benefits from using actual examples from the documents.

'The evidence presented in Document 2 is much more detailed. For example, in Document 2, the author quotes Olivier de Schutter, includes his credentials (UN Special Reporter) and provides a full description of Schutter's data. This makes the argument more strongly supported than Document 1 where the author references Professors Clarke and Senik, which lacks credentials and statistical evidence.'

This gives a clear evaluation of the difference in the strength of evidence in support of the arguments in the documents and leads to an appropriate judgement that Document 2 is more convincing in this aspect than Document 1.

Overall, some candidates seemed to be looking for a 'model' approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the passages clearly. Some candidates used critical thinking terminology in this context which, if applied and explained well, enhanced the evaluation. However, several used critical thinking statements that were not related to the documents in this paper nor clearly explained.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/02
Essay

Key messages

- It is essential that both teachers and candidates are familiar with and fully understand the assessment criteria and syllabus aims.
- The choice of essay question must provide opportunities to develop globally contrasting perspectives.
- Sources selected should offer firmly supported judgements or conclusions based on some combination of evidence, reason, argument, experience, authority and opinion.

General comments

The work seen by examiners in this series was of very variable quality with candidates achieving from mid-level 2 to high-level 4. Only a small number of candidates achieved at the lower end of this scale which sometimes resulted from a poor choice of essay title or question. For instance, the question, 'In what way is Artificial Intelligence impacting on our lifestyle today?' does not immediately suggest that the candidate is focused on both negatives and positives. Furthermore, the title portends a descriptive approach which is likely to minimise argument and debate – necessary ingredients for the development of contrasting perspectives.

Conversely, a tightly focused yet simple, short question often paves the way to the exploration of a topical debate. The question, 'Is xeno transplantation justified?' demands both yes and no answers which is precisely what took place and resulted in a very strong outcome. The framing of the essay question is a key area for teacher engagement with their candidates, when both the meaning and articulation of contrasting perspectives can be explored.

Centres should also consider their approach to the candidates' choice of topic area in which they will conduct their research and investigations. Centres are encouraged to schedule discussion and investigation of several topic areas in order to explore global perspectives and develop the skills required in order to achieve success when undertaking this component. Candidates may well be encouraged to research within one rather narrow area on which the group has been focused. However, some of the strongest essays when candidates pursue research into an area which is of particular interest to them, either because they have strong feelings in relation to the topic or because they simply wish to learn about something quite new to them. Examples seen in the examination series might include, 'What is the most effective way to combat the effects of floods?' or 'Should a paedophile registry be in the public domain?'

As with any academic essay, planning is key to success and only a minority of submissions displayed significant deficiencies in this respect. Most candidates utilised the permissible word length very well. Nevertheless, a significant number fell some way short of the word length and struggled to address all assessment criteria adequately. Essays were, generally, well structured and followed accepted conventions making them easy to read and follow. Highly successful candidates displayed a particularly good level of planning when striking the necessary balance between the presentation of evidence, analysis, synthesis and evaluation in order to address all assessment criteria.

The demands of the assessment criteria, seven in total and each carrying equal weight, are quite rigorous and, perhaps, many candidates do not fully appreciate the requirement to address all criteria. On the whole, illuminating introductions were followed by the presentation of evidence and arguments from multiple sources. These were generally understood to a good degree as demonstrated by analysis but evaluated with very mixed results. Whilst much of this work was strong, all too often little room was left for synthesis into coherent arguments constituting perspectives which should then have been subjected to analysis and evaluation. Many essays concluded with substantial and appropriate discussions but, equally, many failed to do justice to the arguments presented and concluded with a brief paragraph which, often, resulted from reaching the permitted word length. Again, the importance of a high level of planning cannot be over-emphasised.

The strongest essays proceeded from a well-considered introduction and, clearly, many candidates comprehended the importance of engaging the reader from the outset. Preliminary discussion regularly, and correctly, led to the emergence of globally contrasting perspectives although these were not always clearly delineated. A rather smaller number also offered their personal standpoint, with reasoning, which can be used to good effect when reflecting in the conclusion as there is a clear starting point for reference. Additionally, candidates took the opportunity to clarify key terms which served to remove distractions from the central task of developing perspectives.

Comments on assessment criteria

The first criterion focuses on communication skills. As previously stated, there was widespread appreciation of coherent essay structure and the utilisation of appropriate and clear use of language. Better essays displayed a wide range of vocabulary, the use of linking devices aiding fluency and few errors resulting from careful proof-reading. Bibliographies were near-universal and accurate citations showed an improvement. Several centres encouraged their candidates to number citations in-text and then footnote the references which proved to be very effective. Candidates should take care only to include bibliographical references which have been used during the course of the essay rather than simply including everything they have looked at.

The next two criteria consider the sources used. Criterion B examines the quality of source selection. A significant minority of essays were reliant on fact-based sources devoid of argument and were descriptive. Several essays, including some which were particularly well formulated, were entirely reliant on Western sources, limiting them to level 3 for this criterion. However, some candidates combined the use of Western sources with sources emanating from the Indian sub-continent or elsewhere or, indeed, from international bodies, particularly, the United Nations which resulted in global contrast at the level of sources.

Criterion C concerns the treatment of sources both in terms of analysis and evaluation and, as such, should be considered as containing two distinct elements both of which require fulfilment for high achievement. A key issue here, and linking to the previous criterion, is one of quantity or quality. In order to achieve well for criterion B, sources should be detailed or full and detailed. In order to achieve well for criterion C, analysis should show a very good or full understanding and critical evaluation should be undertaken across a range of criteria. It is difficult to see how any of the above can be achieved with a large number of sources. The most successful essays tend to be limited to a small number as low as four. Successful candidates utilised relatively brief, yet telling, quotations from sources followed by critical analysis and few candidates achieved less than level 3. The outcomes for evaluation were very mixed. Some candidates failed to undertake any meaningful evaluation and, at best, merely commented on the author's credentials without considering the content of the source. Generally speaking, candidates who utilised a good range of sources embracing reasoned and supported arguments went on to engage in meaningful evaluation. This suggests that candidates who truly appreciate the requirement to use sources with the right qualities also fully understand the requirements of this criterion, particularly in relation to evaluation as the following excerpt from one essay illustrates. 'The article has been written objectively, with the arguments following the point-evidence-explanation technique. Raab provides alternative solutions and action plans to tackle his identified root cause of female underrepresentation, giving way to further study and research in this field, rather than restricting readers to the dichotomy of a world with or without quotas. Conversely, his arguments only uniquely identify with the political and corporate aspect, but do not consider the ethical, moral, social or psychological implications of implementing such policies'. The candidate is able to demonstrate a profound engagement with the topic under investigation, referencing a commonly-used evaluative term which then expands into identifying both strengths and weaknesses and achieving at the highest level.

The next three criteria assess the perspectives. Criterion D examines a candidate's capacity to present perspectives in a balanced way as well as accepting or understanding an opposing view, particularly one with which they do not agree. This does not necessarily need to be overtly stated as an essay which gives equal room and treatment to contrasting perspectives is indicative of a measure of empathy. However, this balance coupled with a clear appreciation of opposing views will raise the level of achievement. In the following excerpt, the candidate expresses their support for one perspective whilst providing empathetic understanding of the alternative perspective. 'Before extended research on this topic, I believed and still do that Physical education in schools is of vital importance. However, the counterpart has moulded my view on how Physical Education being mandatory in schools has its disadvantages, particularly to those who feel insecure about their own capabilities and the fear of being put down by others'.

Criterion E is a straightforward assessment of the quality of the perspectives developed and is largely determined by the arguments derived from source material. The majority of candidates had little difficulty in achieving level 3 by presenting globally contrasting perspectives although a minority failed to achieve a global dimension. An absence of globally contrasting sources does not necessarily condemn essays to be assessed at level 2. Sources written by Western academics, for instance, may well contain specific references to non-Western geographical regions, cultures, value systems or traditions. However, sources which tend to generalisations and away from specifics may well have little or nothing to offer in terms of global contrast. Candidates need to be aware that the evidence they present must contain convincing references on a global scale.

Criterion F concerns the treatment of perspectives both in terms of analysis and evaluation. This is a key area for development across centres as candidates rarely synthesise the arguments derived from sources into clearly delineated, coherent perspectives which are then open to both analysis and evaluation. This omission may well be a result of a misapprehension. Candidates may well believe that, having undertaken analysis and evaluation at the level of sources, then there is nothing further to add. However, since perspectives should be formulated on the basis of a range of arguments then it becomes clear that further (perhaps limited) analysis is possible and that comparative evaluation is required if a meaningful and supported conclusion is to follow. It may also be the case that candidates fail to plan for this element of the essay and simply run out of space requiring a shift in mindset.

Criterion G assesses the quality of the conclusion. Whilst a supported and balanced conclusion is required, candidates are also assessed on their capacity for reflection which underlines the importance of stating the personal standpoint as a reference point. Strong answers gave substantial or insightful reflection involving a degree of critical and creative thinking. The final element requiring candidates to make suggestions for further research was commonly overlooked altogether, reducing candidates' marks. Successful candidates accept that their research is limited or incomplete, consider how they may further their own understanding and indicate what research would increase this. The following is a good example of reflective thinking. 'Having said that, it is also true that the research I have performed has been limited in scope, and therefore the conclusion I have reached upon is not a definitive one. I carried out all of my research using web sources, and did not have the facility to juxtapose the views I found online, with those in academic journals and books. Furthermore, my research was largely focused upon developed countries, and I relied upon secondary data, where I could not address specific research issues. In order to better my study of the topic, I require to conduct further research narrowing down to more specific issues ailing women across different demographics, and those belonging to developing and underdeveloped nations also. In addition, I also need to explore various other policies under the umbrella term "affirmative action" to verify their efficacy as a tool to bridge gender inequality'.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/03
Team Project: Presentation and
Reflective Paper

General comments

This first March session produced a strong variety of team projects, with some effective practice in both presentations and reflective papers. As in previous sessions, this report focusses separately on the presentation and team paper and is organised by each of the criteria which are assessed.

Individual Presentation

Definition of the Issue

The strongest presentations clearly stated a topic area and issue, and then both contextualised and justified the approach they were taking to it in their presentation: for example, *'We've chosen to focus on achieving quality school education specifically because the majority of global efforts that are being undertaken are targeted at increasing enrollment.'* This criterion was supported by presentations which backed this up with detailed and sometimes varied research. The most effective ways in which this was demonstrated was by specifically cited and sourced evidence, which in some cases was taken from a variety of different types of data, (e.g. qualitative as well as quantitative, graphical as well as textual, from a range of individuals, institutions and geographical contexts). Where candidates were less specific, simply saying for example that an issue had 'several aspects', it was harder for them to demonstrate that their issue had been effectively defined.

Differentiation of Perspectives

In order to show how their perspective on the team's issue (and their eventual solution) differs from those of other team members, candidates need to state clearly what each perspective is. Most presentations did this successfully through a simple statement in the course of their presentation, such as these which relate to the issue of student education: *'My group will be talking about Public-Private cooperation, government reforms, modernization of pedagogy, while I'll be talking about blended learning.'* The strongest presentations on this criterion developed this statement further by explaining the significance of their own approach, how it differed from the other team perspectives and even why they considered it to be the strongest possible perspective.

Structure of argument

The purpose of the presentation is to outline the issue and make a supported argument for a solution from the candidate's perspective. Effective presentations recognised this by using discourse markers, (i.e. 'firstly', 'secondly', 'finally') to indicate the structure and sequence of their points. Even more effective presentations also indicated the topic of each stage of their presentation to their audience. For example, one candidate indicated each stage of their argument as 'economic aspects', 'legal solutions' and 'structural aspects' in turn, maintaining their focus on the stage which had been indicated.

Conclusion

The conclusion of a presentation has two functions: to provide a conclusion which is clearly supported by the arguments and evidence which have been presented and to state a solution to the problem which has been articulated in response to the team's issue. At the highest levels, the solution should be effective and innovative. It is for candidates to explain how their solution has these qualities explicitly, with reasons. It is not enough to imply that a solution is effective without stating this. In some cases, this was done by outlining the benefits in turn of the candidate's solution, each supported by specific evidence which had been developed earlier in the presentation. Sometimes the presentation of the solution also set out how it differed from the other solutions within the group and also how it differed from previous solutions to the problem. By doing this candidates were also showing how their solution was new or innovative.

Presentational Skills

As in previous sessions, the vast majority of presentations achieved in Level 3 because candidates were able to largely maintain eye contact with their audience and using clear visual aids which supported the content of the presentation. Candidates who were more ambitious in the variety and precision of their visual prompts, incorporating them into their argument in fresh and directed ways, were able to move into Level 4 and above by showing at least some creativity. In general, candidates who were aware of the presentational tools available to them, and used these in deliberate and directed ways to engage their audience and enhance their arguments scored more strongly.

Reflective Paper

The reflective papers showed much encouraging evidence of clear evaluation, both of the effectiveness of the team's collaboration and of what the candidate had learned from the process of research from other sources. A number of candidates were also aware of group roles, and were able for example to identify who took on the role of leadership and what the impact of this was. The process of collaboration was also sometimes usefully summarised with a statement of strengths and weaknesses, which proved another way of demonstrating evaluation:

'Overall, we communicated regularly and both respected and deconstructed other's perspectives well. If I were to change one thing, however, it would improve maintenance of records of our discussions- many of our brainstormed ideas did not make their way into final solutions as we focused on discussion over documentation.'

When it came to reflection on learning, effective reflective papers frequently utilised a 'before I started ... after the project' structure which clearly specified the starting points and finishing points of their knowledge, capacity to reflect and development of skills. By explaining the difference between these two points, supported by specific examples of what they had learned, they were able to reflect clearly on how their learning had been developed by the process of doing the team project. A good example is this reflective paper responding to the issue of traffic congestion:

'At the start of my group work, I did not think that I would be affected in any way researching a simple and uncontroversial topic like ours. I had never given much thought to the emotional stress people experience when stuck in severely congested traffic. Nor did I empathise with people displaying road rage. Reading about emotional stress caused by traffic congestion and its effect on people's productivity, I now understand better how this affects people in work places. I was saddened to learn that pizza delivery boys, stuck in traffic and late to deliver are charged the price of the pizza.'

Reflective papers which took a narrative approach on the other hand, recounting the stages of work gone through by the team without judging their value or effectiveness, found it more difficult to clearly state evaluation or reflection.