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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

THINKING SKILLS

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Grade thresholds taken for Syllabus 8436 (Thinking Skills) in the November 2005 examination.

| | maximum mark available | minimum mark required for grade: | | |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|----|----|
| | | A | B | E |
| Component 1 | 50 | 38 | 34 | 22 |
| Component 2 | 50 | 29 | 24 | 12 |

The thresholds (minimum marks) for Grades C and D are normally set by dividing the mark range between the B and the E thresholds into three. For example, if the difference between the B and the E threshold is 24 marks, the C threshold is set 8 marks below the B threshold and the D threshold is set another 8 marks down. If dividing the interval by three results in a fraction of a mark, then the threshold is normally rounded down.

Grade Thresholds are published for all GCE A/AS and IGCSE subjects where a corresponding mark scheme is available.

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| <p>Paper 8436/01 Multiple Choice</p> |
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| <i>Question Number</i> | <i>Key</i> | <i>Question Number</i> | <i>Key</i> |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1 | C | 26 | C |
| 2 | D | 27 | A |
| 3 | D | 28 | C |
| 4 | E | 29 | C |
| 5 | B | 30 | E |
| 6 | C | 31 | D |
| 7 | C | 32 | E |
| 8 | B | 33 | D |
| 9 | C | 34 | E |
| 10 | D | 35 | C |
| 11 | D | 36 | B |
| 12 | E | 37 | A |
| 13 | E | 38 | C |
| 14 | D | 39 | C |
| 15 | A | 40 | B |
| 16 | C | 41 | C |
| 17 | E | 42 | E |
| 18 | C | 43 | D |
| 19 | E | 44 | A |
| 20 | B | 45 | C |
| 21 | D | 46 | A |
| 22 | D | 47 | B |
| 23 | B | 48 | B |
| 24 | E | 49 | C |
| 25 | A | 50 | D |

Paper 8436/02

Paper 2

General comments

The paper was perhaps slightly more difficult than last June's paper, but most candidates were able to complete answers to all three questions. A few performed extremely well, and there was a wide range of scores. However, a few candidates performed very badly, and appeared not to understand the nature of Critical Thinking.

Again, performance varied between Centres, with candidates from some Centres demonstrating a clear understanding as to what constitutes good Critical Thinking, and candidates from a few Centres either limiting their answers to summaries of the stimulus material or discussing the topic of the argument in question, rather than analysing and evaluating the argument itself. What is needed is careful analysis and evaluation, leading to a considered judgement. It is not the length of the answer that is crucial, but the clarity, consistency and accuracy of the reasoning. Hence a short succinct answer can gain more marks than a long and elaborate one.

All questions appeared to discriminate well between candidates, in that for each question the range of marks awarded was wide. There was no question for which marks were consistently low, but a few candidates had relatively low marks for **Question 3**, probably because they spent too much time on **Question 1**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This is the question where candidates are most likely to write at unnecessary length, for example by telling the story over again before getting down to the business of evaluating the evidence. This means that they are writing maybe a page or two for which no marks can be given, and that they are wasting valuable time that could be spent on other questions. This problem was less prevalent than in previous years, and most candidates showed that they knew they could launch straight into evaluation. A good way to introduce the topic, used by a few good candidates, is to state one's conclusion, e.g. 'Based on the evidence given, it cannot be concluded that sexual harassment occurred'. One can then go on to support this conclusion by evaluating the various pieces of evidence.

Most candidates did conclude that the evidence did not support the claim of sexual harassment by Alicia Bonewska. Many candidates did not separate their answer into **(a)** assessing the credibility of the evidence, and **(b)** making a reasoned case, but they were not penalised for including parts of **(a)** in **(b)** and vice versa. They were credited for making the crucial points wherever these were presented. However, those candidates who do separate these tasks are more likely to present a coherent reasoned case. The various pieces of evidence were generally well covered, such as: Alicia's resentment about Theo's promotion; that the doctor, though expert, could not provide evidence of the cause of stress; hearsay and vested interest in regard to the lawyer; lack of corroboration of Alicia's claims by any of the other witnesses; Theo's vested interest in denying the charge; Teale's promotion; the personnel list showing that there was another female team leader; the statement of the law relating to sexual harassment. What is required for part **(b)** is a suitable conclusion (as stated above), relevant pieces of evidence together with a brief statement as to why they support the conclusion, and a brief statement as to why those items of evidence that seem to count against the conclusion can be disregarded. It was rare for a candidate to achieve full marks for this section, but most gave the appropriate conclusion, together with one or two pieces of supporting evidence.

Question 2

- (a)(i) Most candidates gained a mark for this question.
- (ii) What was required here was recognition that the traditionalists are portrayed as people who think that modern art does not require special skills, and is therefore without merit. Few candidates succeeded in mentioning both skill and merit.
- (b)(i) This question differentiated well, with better candidates saying that in the first sentence rubbish meant 'without artistic merit', and in the last sentence of paragraph 5 it meant 'something no longer wanted or needed' or 'trash to be thrown away'. Some candidates got only one of these definitions right, and some neither.
- (ii) Most candidates scored two points here, which they were able to do by quoting from paragraph 4.
- (c) Very few candidates were able to give one of the possible answers, i.e. that (merely) showing something to be impermanent or not precious is of some artistic value; that (merely) succeeding in what is intended gives a thing artistic value; that something's being recognised as art makes it art. They often presented something stated in paragraph 4, even though they were asked for something in addition to what was stated. Candidates need to remember that in the context of critical thinking questions 'assumptions' always means 'unstated assumptions'.
- (d) The crucial point here was that it is only a weak challenge because it implies that no skill is needed to produce modern conceptual art, but the argument claims that skill is not essential for art, though ideas/imagination are. Some recognised this, but many did not score full marks here.
- (e) There is a range of flaws to choose from here – a contradiction, an *ad hominem* attack, and unwarranted assumptions. There was a wide spread of marks, some identifying one or two assumptions and either describing them well or vaguely or not at all.
- (f) This question proved fairly difficult; with some candidates failing to notice that if the cleaner had been told by the artist to throw the exhibit away, this destroyed his point about the work being recognised as rubbish in the proper and not the derogatory sense of the word. Full marks were achieved if candidates gave this point, but also were able to point out that if it was just 'part of the show' then this underlined rather than refuted the author's points about ideas and imagination in art.

Question 3

Answers to this question show wide variation among Centres, with most candidates demonstrating understanding of how to analyse and evaluate an argument, and candidates from a few Centres discussing the topic which is raised in the stimulus passage without getting to grips with the argument presented. However, few score very high marks on this question, some because they do not offer further arguments.

The main conclusion is that the *terrible scenes of kidnapping should be broadcast in full*. This is supported as follows:

R1 People have a right to know what is happening.

R2 No politician has a right to withhold the truth.

R3 We are intelligent adults and able to judge.

R4 Denying information infringes human rights.

Therefore

IC1 (from R1-R4) (Suppressing information) is wrong.

R5 If people know the worst consequences, they will oppose war.

R6 If they think war has no bad consequences, they will support it.

Therefore

IC2 The whole truth must be told.

Therefore

MC The terrible scenes of kidnapping should be broadcast in full.

Although the structure of the argument is less complex than last time, it did not prove very easy to give a comprehensive analysis of the structure, and few reached the highest level for analysis. A good number of candidates could identify the main conclusion and most of the reasons, but many failed to state the main conclusion, and focused on war rather than kidnapping.

To gain the highest mark for analysis candidates needed to correctly identify the main and the intermediate conclusions, together with the supporting reasons. Marks are given at a lower level for identifying the main conclusion and most of the main strands of reasoning, even if intermediate conclusions are not specifically mentioned, and at a lower level still for recognising the general direction of the argument, even if the main conclusion is not correctly identified. Little credit can be given for simply repeating or summarising the passage.

Good answers made a range of criticisms, for example:

- Telling the whole truth may not require showing the full broadcast of the 'dreadful scenes'.
- Showing these scenes may have adverse effects on children and on the families of kidnap victims.
- Sometimes politicians may need to withhold the truth for reasons of national security.
- The author presents the counter arguments, but does not say what is supposed to be wrong with them.
- War may sometimes be necessary, though the argument assumes it should never be supported.
- If violence leads to violence, as is stated, it is inconsistent to claim that seeing violent retaliatory acts will incline people to more peaceful solutions.

Most candidates were able to offer some of these criticisms, and most did not rely on vague general comments such as 'there are not enough statistics' or 'this is a lop-sided argument'. In general candidates did better on evaluation than on precise analysis of structure – perhaps because the subject was topical and they felt they had something to contribute to the discussion. However, many candidates did not offer a section on 'further argument', so lost a possible four marks. Some good further arguments were supplied, either developing some of the above criticisms, or suggesting, in favour of the argument, that if people can see exactly what is happening, they will be able to vote in an informed way, or, against the argument, that full broadcast of the terrible scenes gives terrorists exactly what they want, and may aid recruitment to their cause.