

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 applied in all questions, for example in **Question 2** where some candidates evaluated the argument, rather than the evidence, as required in the question. Many did not respond to the idea of challenge in **Question 3**.

There was generally a good balance between the time taken on each of the questions reflecting the number of marks available. This was a pleasing development.

To gain higher marks in **Questions 2** and **3** there should be clear development in the points made. This may relate to the impact of material in the documents on the arguments. It may also show consideration of, not just **what** a strength or weakness may be, but also **how** or **why** it is a strength or weakness.

Candidates should provide brief and relevant references from the documents to support their evaluation of evidence and argument otherwise the answer is generalised, containing only assertions or claims. They should also explain what impact this has on the argument or chosen evidence which goes beyond a generic statement like 'weakens/strengthens'. They need to explain how the assessment does this.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content. The candidates need to focus on an evaluation of the provenance, perspectives, evidence and argument to reach an overall judgement as to whether the author of Document 2 **challenged** that of Document 1.

In **Question 3** the strongest responses reached a supported judgment about challenge. Weaker responses simply compared the content of the two documents.

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 when asked to identify in **Question 1 (a)** and part of **1(b)**, will not gain credit.

General comments

There was little evidence of candidates misunderstanding the documents and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. Some candidates did not pay careful enough attention to the command words in the questions. For example, 'increasing' in **Question 1a**, 'evidence' in **Question 2** and 'challenge' in **Question 3**.

It was encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the arguments put forward in the documents in **Question 3** but most only gave a general judgement and did not address the idea of 'challenge'.

The length of answers was appropriate for the number of marks available and no candidate appeared to run out of time. Unfortunately, there was no clear evidence of planning for the longer questions meaning that key words from the questions were not always fully addressed and responses sometimes lacked clear structure.

Some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise references to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents and evaluated their

significance and impact on the argument. This demonstrated that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being presented.

The rubric of the paper requires candidates to write in continuous prose. While concise answers in **Question 1** are acceptable, in **Questions 2 and 3** full paragraphing, rather than bullet points, should be used.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) As an 'identify' question the best answers simply and concisely stated the words of the author without paraphrasing or expanding. **Question 1** provides an encouragement for the candidate to fully read and digest the detail of Document 1. The key words were 'increasing its air pollution'.

An answer gaining both available marks was:

'According to the author, China is still increasing its air pollution by approving new coal-fired power plants and by increasing urbanisation.'

The answer required the candidate to reference 'new' or 'increasing'. Many candidates simply identified the current pollution problems rather than ways it is still increasing.

For example, this answer scored 0 marks:

'Two ways in which China is still increasing its air pollution is that two-thirds of China's energy is from coal and China consumes half of the world's coal supply.'

- (b) The question required candidates to identify and explain two different types of negative effects. Many were able to identify the effects, but few correctly explained them. The key was to explain the effect not the consequences.

A 2-mark answer that covers both 'identify' and 'explain' would be:

'A negative effect was worsened public health, e.g. heart disease (Identify. Burning coal for industrial power emits pollution that has a negative effect on air quality which leads to these health problems.' (Explain)

An example of a 2-mark answer (out of 4) where both 'identify' marks are awarded but no explanation is:

'It causes several health problems including heart disease and breathing problems which lead to premature death. [The explanation is a consequence of heart disease not a reason for the implication that public health has worsened]

It damages China's international reputation as it leads to acid rain and smog in China's neighbouring countries'. [There is no explanation of what leads to acid rain etc and what effect it has on neighbours.]

Question 2

This question was generally well answered with most candidates correctly assessing the evidence rather than simply the argument. It was pleasing to see in **Question 2** that candidates had generally read the requirements of the question carefully. The question required an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the evidence used by the author.

The highest achieving candidates recognised that the author used expert sources with a global reputation, for example, The World Health Organisation and Greenpeace Asia and explained why they had authority. More specific evidence was also sourced from those with likely first-hand experience. Higher scoring candidates recognised this, named the sources and explained why they were reliable. This, three stage approach tends to lead to higher marks.

In highlighting weaknesses, higher scoring candidates saw that there were some vague statistics: 'about', 'around', 'almost', 'estimated' – they identified these by quoting the actual estimates used.

The difference between higher and moderately scoring candidates was usually defined by the appropriate explanation of the strengths and weaknesses, not just by identifying them, or only referring to the document. Many candidates made basic statements without explaining or developing them.

In an 'evidence' question the provenance of the document and the credibility of the author is only relevant when it shows their ability to research and select appropriate evidence.

For strengths of the evidence, the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'Beina relies on the World Health Organisation, Greenpeace East Asia's report and local organisations Friends of Nature and Global Village to support her argument. These sources are highly credible, especially WHO and Greenpeace, as they are globally renowned for their expertise in health and environmental issues and are unlikely to exaggerate the evidence against China.'

For weaknesses of the evidence, the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'While the names of well known and reputed global organisations are used, there still remain a lot of statistics and figures given that are largely unsourced. For instance, the phrases 'experts say' or 'experts highlight that...' precede some bits of evidence. This lowers the overall admissibility of the evidence itself because the provenance of such evidence is not made clear leaving it little better than mere assertion. Other examples of unsourced evidence include 'recent studies have reported that emissions from China's industries...' or simply 'evidence suggests that'.'

Question 3

The most frequent approach is to directly compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two documents throughout the answer looking at their different perspectives. The strongest candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each document. There was no correct answer and candidates were free to argue that Document 2 did or did not challenge Document 1 or there was equal challenge.

Few addressed the issue of challenge in their answer did not access the higher mark for judgement and alternative perspectives. It is important to look carefully at the question to see what type of judgement is required.

Some candidates tended to directly compare the content of the documents without evaluating their relative strengths or how they challenged one another. This simplistic/undeveloped approach which describes a few points comparing two documents, was rarely awarded higher than level 1 marks.

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 supporting evidence provided. Candidates achieving the highest marks gave clear examples from the documents and their impact on the overall assessment, while lower scoring answers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without using supporting examples. Such answers were consequently superficial and relied, at best, on undeveloped quotes from the text.

Some candidates evaluated the theme of the argument in terms of their own attitudes to industrial pollution in China. This is not appropriate as the question requires evaluation of the authors' arguments.

The strongest responses adopted a structured response to answering the question: methodically evaluating the relative strengths of the argument (with intermediate judgements), using appropriate examples and analysis of impact, before coming to a reasoned judgment at the end.

Examples of strong evaluation of the arguments are:

'Most of the evidence in Document 2 revolves around Hebei. Most of Li Jing's argument stems from the quotes from officials of Hebei or its Provincial Governor. This weakens the argument of how the government is totally committed to tackling industrial pollution. For example, the levels of PM2.5 dropped by 18.9 per cent from a year earlier. This, though, cannot be generalised to the rest of China. Document 1 on the other hand, provides evidence from more than just 2 or 3 cities. For example, the report refers to 367 cities that were

monitored by Greenpeace Asia. This large [and varied] sample size helps the author to validate his argument. This evidence is supported by credible and reliable sources such as the World Health Organisation and Greenpeace East Asia.'

For judgement, a strong answer was: (Note this is a summary of points made throughout the answer)

'The author in Document 2 doesn't provide her audience with clear reasoning for her argument. She only provides quotes from government officials that claim they will change the country's condition. On top of that Jing doesn't include significant evidence that states that it is made a significant change. For example, she uses figures like small particles reduced by 18.9 per cent in a year, but without giving a starting point.'

Document 1 does a good job selecting evidence that strongly supports the claim and properly and clearly structures the reasons supporting the claim by providing a wide range of perspectives. This is a reason why the argument in Document 1 challenges that of Document 2 as the evidence, structure and content are more focused'

Some candidates seemed to adopt a formulaic approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the documents clearly. Candidates are required to engage critically with the documents, rather than make generalised comments that could apply to any document. The lack of consideration of the 'challenge' emphasised this point.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

<p>Paper 9239/02 Essay</p>

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 or opinion.
- Evaluation of sources and perspectives should form a substantial element of candidates' essays.

General Comments

The work seen by examiners in this series was of variable quality, with approximately one half of candidates achieving at higher level 3 or above and the other half achieving lower level 3 or at the top of level 2.

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. Essays were, generally, well-structured and followed accepted conventions making them easy to read and understand candidates' thinking and direction. Highly successful candidates displayed a particularly good level of planning when striking the necessary balance between the presentation of evidence, analysis, evaluation and synthesis in order to address all assessment criteria. Few, if any, essays ran beyond the permissible word length of 2,000 words beyond which, material is not assessed. However, there were a small number which were shorter than the advised minimum length of 1,750 words. Candidates are not directly penalised in these cases but examiners may find it difficult to award at higher levels in the case of **Criterion C** as a very good or excellent understanding of source material cannot be demonstrated or in the case of **Criterion E** where perspectives are neither detailed nor full.

An informed and thoughtful consideration and wording of the essay title or question is the starting point for a successful essay. The best titles are concise and leave little room for confusion as to the candidate's aims. For instance, 'Is GMO helpful for addressing increasing food demand?', or, 'Is nuclear the power of the future?', offer questions which are clear and enable the candidates to develop globally contrasting perspectives. Conversely, many titles do not serve this purpose as is the case with, 'Are we welcoming an uninvited revolution?'. Quite often, essay titles took a form which tends to description and is framed in terms of degree rather than contrast as in the case of, 'What is the impact of technology in our lives?'. In a quite different example, a candidate asks, 'Should the United States implement stricter gun policies?'. The title immediately suggests that the development of globally contrasting perspectives is unlikely. Finally, the question, 'How does poaching affect the economy and the environment, can tourism be a panacea?', appears to be asking rather too much within the confines of a 2,000 word essay and presents a challenge with regard to clear aims. Precision will help to focus candidates' minds.

Only a minority of candidates appeared to understand the centrality of globally contrasting perspectives when planning and writing their essays. Their starting point is to articulate precisely what these perspectives are and why they are global in character. Arguments and evidence are analysed and evaluated for one perspective and then for the other. Having clearly established the terms and content of the debate, they move on to synthesising the evidence for both perspectives lending them coherence and order, explaining the particular strengths or weaknesses within each perspective before offering a comparative evaluation which will lead them to a supported conclusion. Essentially, candidates who follow this process are thinking in terms of perspectives throughout the essay and achieve at high levels. Without doubt, this process of reconstruction is not an easy one but necessary if candidates are to achieve at a higher level.

Many candidates encountered difficulties in developing globally contrasting perspectives, limiting the opportunity to achieve at higher levels. Some of the recurring issues which contributed to these difficulties follow:

- One perspective is developed rather well and may embrace global examples. However, the alternative perspective is barely developed and global examples are absent. As such, perspectives cannot be assessed as globally contrasting.
- Evidence for sources is offered in general terms without any reference to a particular culture, society, nation or region. The absence of specificity again results in the development of contrasting perspectives which are not global.

Comments on specific criteria

Criterion 1 focuses on communication skills, essay structure and the quality of citations and referencing. Almost universally, candidates are well-versed in essay structure and, on the whole, examiners found essays generally clear in their direction and easy to follow. Candidates commonly achieved at level 3 with a substantial number achieving at level 4 as their command of English is very good. Several candidates understood the value of an informative introduction in which perspectives are clearly stated accompanied by an explanation of their global significance. Examiners gain an immediate understanding of the intended direction and range of the essay. Many candidates could improve their level through quite simple measures including careful proofreading removing common and repetitive errors, the use of 'signposting' to guide the reader through the different stages of the essay and appropriate paragraphing. Communication should, at all times, be purposeful and, on occasions, this could be improved. Impediments include lengthy introductions of authors and their achievements or standing or lengthy sections of candidates' opinions. Whilst candidates should express their views, such expressions should be concise as the essay should be evidence-based. Whilst the quality of communication and essay structure is the main determinant of level, examiners take careful note of the quality of citations and referencing which may impact this level positively or negatively. Citations should clearly indicate the sources used on that page without ambiguity and then appear in the bibliography. Some candidates use the briefest in-text citation which is inadequate and, on occasions, not all citations appear in the bibliography or appear in a bibliography listing many sources which have not been used. A handful of candidates used few citations or just one or two even though substantial bibliographies followed the essay and, in these cases, the level for this criterion was significantly and negatively impacted. An increasing number of centres are encouraging their candidates to use numbered citations which are translated into full, footnoted citations which is highly effective and has the added advantage that they do not contribute to the overall word count of the essay.

The next two criteria consider the sources used. **Criterion 2** examines the quality of source selection. A significant minority of essays were reliant on fact-based sources, which were descriptive and devoid of argument. Several essays, including some which were particularly well formulated, were entirely reliant on Western sources, limiting them to Level 3 for this criterion. Additionally, by using limited sources it can then be difficult to develop perspectives with global content. In order to achieve at higher levels, candidates are required to access sources which demonstrate global contrast. The term global should be understood in a wider context than, simply, geographical region. Sources may originate from differing cultural, religious or political systems or traditions as well as from countries or regions with differing levels of economic or industrial development. When deciding on an essay title and the research they intend to pursue, candidates need to be aware of the range of sources they can access. An essay entitled, 'To what extent is it right to consider the current Indo-Pak tensions as a prominent cross to World War 3?', was based on Western sources from the US, UK and Sweden, as well as Indian sources and the United Nations. Global contrast was demonstrated as a consequence of utilising globally contrasting sources and achieved at a high level. Had the candidate found a source from Pakistan, then the essay might well have achieved level 5 for this criterion. Similar contrast might have been demonstrated using Western sources only but, without the benefit of globally contrasting sources, at the cost of a lower level of achievement.

Criterion 3 concerns the treatment of sources in terms of analysis and evaluation and should be considered as containing two distinct elements of equal value, 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 2**, sources should be detailed or full and detailed. In order to achieve well for **Criterion 3**, 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 strongest essays tend to be limited to a relatively small number of principal sources with, perhaps, other sources used to provide background data or facts. Successful candidates used relatively brief, yet telling,

quotations from sources followed by critical analysis and few candidates achieved less than Level 3. Occasionally, candidates incorporate lengthy quotations from sources which is not helpful as this limits the candidates' own work within the permissible word length. Brief quotations are quite adequate in conveying a central argument from a source. The outcomes for evaluation were very mixed: approximately half of all candidates did not undertake a sufficient evaluation with some merely commenting on the author's credentials, without considering the content of the source. The following paragraph from an essay entitled, 'Should developing countries prioritise the reduction of carbon emissions?', illustrates the candidate's understanding and command of the material, as well as combining a level of critical evaluation of the source whilst critiquing an opposing source and, hence, employing a degree of synthesis:

'But is this rate of global decoupling fast enough to keep the planet from warming another two degrees Celsius?'. What's to like in this rebuttal is that the writer uses simple logic to dismiss a strong argument when he says 'When emissions stall at 32.1 billion metric tons for two years, that's still 64.2 billion metric tons of carbon being pumped into the atmosphere over two years.' Moreover, since this piece of narrative evidence was present in Mrs. Argyriou's article, the rebuttal acts as a direct challenge to her argument and, hence, making the writer's argument more convincing to the reader'.

The next three criteria assess the perspectives. **Criterion 4** examines a candidate's capacity to present perspectives in a balanced way, as well as displaying empathy for alternative perspectives by way of acceptance or understanding of an opposing view and especially one they do not agree with. 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. As such, several candidates achieved level 4 because the perspectives developed were balanced and treated without any evident bias. However, this balance, coupled with a clear appreciation of opposing views, will raise the level of achievement. Whilst no examples of this expression of overt empathy for the alternative perspective were found in the current series, an example from a recent examination series serves to illustrate the point. One candidate researching into literary censorship wrote, 'While it is not difficult to empathise with the idea that certain themes can offend the audience, that parental concerns about the education their child receives are valid and that the steps they may take to control any exposure they deem harmful for their child are justifiable, it may well be unacceptable, both ethically and legally, to take measures which will restrict others from receiving the exposure someone personally considers harmful'.

Criterion 5 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 developing contrasting perspectives and many developed global dimensions and global contrast. Only one or two candidates offered little or no contrast as a consequence of generating a single or vague perspective. It is essential that candidates have undertaken sufficient research and reading in order to clarify, in their own minds, what perspectives are relevant to the topic they are researching, the degree of contrast they generate and the extent to which they can be globally differentiated. With this in mind, they must be prepared to modify their approach or, quite possibly, consider a different area of research. Only when perspectives are globally contrasting can candidates access levels 4 and 5. In order to achieve at higher levels, examiners are considering several factors. One would expect to find several viewpoints contributing to the development of a perspective. Furthermore, they are substantial in that both facts and reasoned arguments are conveyed. Finally, the perspectives are illustrated with globally differentiated examples. Taken together, perspectives benefit from both breadth and depth and may be considered full and detailed. Again, no examples were found in the current series to illustrate these points and an essay from a recent series will be used to make the point. In the essay, 'To what extent is foreign aid beneficial or detrimental for the long-term development of nations?', arguments presented included contributing to economic growth, eradicating disease, improving nutrition, improving democracy and human rights, counteracting instability and terrorism, increasing corruption and dependency, financing the state thereby reducing the need for efficient taxation and lenders pursuing geopolitical aims. Haiti, Indonesia and Rwanda were used as examples of recipients whilst the US, UK, China and Japan as examples of lenders. Perspectives were both full and detailed.

Criterion 6 concerns the treatment of perspectives in terms of analysis and evaluation. This is a key area for development across the vast majority of Centres, as candidates rarely synthesise the arguments derived from sources into clearly delineated, coherent perspectives which are then open to both analysis and evaluation. Having said that, many more candidates are outlining perspectives in their introductions as well as explaining their contrasting nature and global character, possibly supported by some key data. Not only is this beneficial to the candidate in providing focus but also to the examiner who, from an early stage, has a clear idea of the candidate's intent. Stronger candidates are able to analyse and evaluate the relative strengths of arguments in terms of their contribution to perspectives as well as evaluate the relative strengths of perspectives. Not only do perspectives become coherent as a consequence of this work, but so does the conclusion which, to a large extent, is justified as a result. Candidates benefit from examining and explaining

contributing arguments but it is essential that they understand they are the building blocks used to construct and develop perspectives, the central aim of this component.

Criterion 7 assesses the quality of the conclusion and the level descriptors indicate that examiners are looking for several contributing factors. The starting point is a supported and balanced conclusion which should emerge from a consideration of the relative merits of developed perspectives. Candidates are also assessed on their capacity for reflection and it is important to note that examiners are not looking for reflection on the work processes or research undertaken. Whilst it is important that candidates should develop their learning skills, reflection on this should not form any part of the conclusion. Candidates should reflect on their findings; what are the implications and consequences for their personal standpoint, other people, communities or nation states? In an essay entitled, 'How effective are the Geneva Conventions in the current time?', the candidate concludes that they are not. They then engage reflectively and go on to say that:

'I believed that the Geneva Conventions were a well suited tool to guide peace and prosperity. However, my ideas were completely transformed after I read the book, 'International Law and New Wars', by Christine Chinking. It eliminated my preconceived notions about International Humanitarian Law (IHL). I became informed about the current status of it and compliance. It also educated me about the changing dynamics of war and hence reforms in the law have become necessary today. I think that IHL has become incompetent in today's time. It does not explicitly define 'terrorism' and what counts as wars'.

Finally, a further element of reflection is required whereby the candidate makes suggestions for further research, which was commonly overlooked altogether and inhibited candidates' marks. Successful candidates accept that their research is limited or incomplete and go on to consider how they may further their own understanding, as well as indicate what research would address this. Few examples were found of clear and accurate identification of further research but the following was taken from an essay focused on GMO foods:

'For me to understand this topic further, I should research more into the science of GMO as well as their impact sociologically and psychologically because food also affects our personalities and the way we behave'.

Whilst greater substance would be required for a mark at the highest level, the above is indicative of reflection, which adds to the overall quality of the conclusion.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/03
Team Project: Presentation and Reflective Paper

Key messages

- Presentations are effective when the issue and perspectives are clearly defined and developed
- Effective conclusions are linked to evidence and justify the solution
- A range of presentational techniques can be used to support the argument

General comments

Submissions for this session again included examples of effective practice across the range of criteria which were assessed. This included both the individual presentation and reflective paper. What follows are a series of examples of this across specific criteria.

Individual Presentation

Definition of the Issue

Presentations were most effective when they defined their issue at an early stage, and then developed this as their argument progressed. This is an example of how an issue can be effectively identified and immediately explained in specific detail:

'...the topic for my presentation today is "How government policies on land ownership is affecting the environment in the red corridor." So, the Adivasis are landless communities residing in rural India. The poor implementation of special laws on prevention of atrocities, abolition of bonded labour, and protection of civil rights has led them to join Maoist movements which results in armed conflict between them and the government.'

Issues were also well chosen when their larger global context allowed for the development of alternative perspectives which complemented their own local or personal situation.

Differentiation of Perspectives

In order to differentiate perspectives, candidates need to clearly identify their own approach and compare this with those taken by other members of the team (or others identified through research), with those also specifically listed. At Level 1, candidates do not make their own approach clear. At level 2, this is identified but there is no reference to other approaches. On the other hand, the alternatives are specified and listed at Level 4, and at Level 5 the candidate compares them in order to explain and evaluate their own approach. This can be done succinctly, as in the following example which achieves at Level 4: *'There are three different perspectives within this combined group topic which are the economic, moral and societal perspectives which deal with regulating and monitoring malpractice as well as issues regarding privatising healthcare facilities as well as my topic which is the unaffordability crisis which arises due to the grant of patents.'*

Structure of Argument

Effectively structured presentations specify each stage of their argument and link them together using discourse markers ('firstly', 'in addition', 'finally' and so on). This was not necessarily linked directly to the

length of the presentation, but rather to the extent to which the candidate was in control of the order of topics and signalled these to the audience.

Conclusion and Solution

Conclusions and solutions are distinct but linked: the conclusion, at the end of the presentation, should be supported by the arguments and evidence that have been presented but also propose solutions that are justified by reasons (showing they are effective) and might also have reasons supporting their innovation. The following solution shows how it is organised and explains why it is effective: *'I have broken down my solution into three parts which are education in school, vocational training and other programmes. ... my solution (sic) will help at a very basic level in getting women into politics, and helping them work in politics or businesses.'*

Presentational Skills

Candidates can use a range of methods to engage their audience and support their presentation. At the most fundamental level eye contact can do this, and that may be supported by clear intonation, other aspects of body language, effective slides and perhaps their devices linked to the arguments being made.

Reflective Paper

In the reflective paper candidates are asked to do two things. They must evaluate the effectiveness of team work, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as their overall effectiveness. After this, they should reflect on the learning they have individually achieved, identifying the starting and end points of their knowledge and evaluating the differences between the two. This is an example of the effective evaluation of collaboration:

'As a group I believe we worked well and contributed equally in the group. When brainstorming ideas, I was in the Team Worker role as most of the time I helped my team to identify the tasks and the things that need to be done. As few members in the group digressed during the process, I made sure that we stayed focused. Here, I played the role of a Shaper of my team it is important to get the task done or the discussions without wasting time.'

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/04
Research Report

Key messages

- Evidence should be analysed and not just described.
- Evaluation should go beyond comment on the origin of sources.
- Reflection should consider the methods and scope of research.

General comments

There was an interesting range of topics and in general there was good scope for discussing different perspectives. A sense of enthusiasm was evident and in many cases candidates had taken a lot of trouble to research the subjects and shown initiative in asking experts and framing questionnaires. The very best work showed a developed critical sense towards the evidence used. Assumptions were challenged by alternative viewpoints being considered. In one case, some personal research was used tellingly to criticise assumptions made about infrastructure developments. There were weaknesses in linking material to the actual question. The main areas for development, however, lie in evaluating an appropriate range of evidence and in reflecting on the process of research and the validity of the conclusions reached.

Comments on specific questions

Though there were many instances of effective selection of evidence, some reports did not reference the sources used so the result was more like an essay in which various research has been undertaken but the evidence has not been referenced and assessed. This is not an essay but a report and the key element is the analysis and evaluation of named and referenced evidence.

In some cases, the evidence was not always very appropriate. The idea is not that outdated or questionable evidence should be chosen with a view to showing evaluation skills by pointing these limitations out. In a study of e-currencies, for example, there is limited point in choosing an anonymous study going back to 2008 as the whole situation has obviously developed rapidly in ten years.

Also, asking teachers for their opinion is not always appropriate when there might be a range of expert opinion available. This is not to disrespect the expertise of any teacher, but in important topics there may be more appropriate sources. A similar point could be made about asking fellow students about major moral or world issues. If the topic is focused on the age group, this may be relevant; but asking a group of students about what they think about, say, Global Warming, might have limited value when there is a wealth of informed scientific opinion available.

The reports should analyse evidence, that is, link it to the topic and explain its view and significance. Long verbatim transcripts of interviews or quotations from sources which merely describe sources are not necessary. Where case studies are used, long descriptions should be avoided. The case study should be used as evidence and evaluated. Analysis should get to the core of the evidence prior to evaluating it and descriptive writing should be kept to the minimum necessary for analysis and evaluation to be understood. The evidence chosen must, of course, be relevant to the question and not the topic. If, for example, the topic is whether governments should control the internet, evidence should relate to this and not merely be used to outline information about the internet or even its general advantages or disadvantages.

The Report should build on the critical skills of the AS units in assessing the validity of the different perspectives and evidence. It may be helpful to explain that 'perspectives' are different views, opinions,

approaches, assumptions, claims or beliefs about issues. If an issue has, say, political, economic or social aspects, then within these there should be competing perspectives and conflicting evidence which are evaluated to reach a judgement.

In some cases, different general viewpoints were offered but there was limited assessment of them and little evaluation of evidence.

There were some outstanding critical considerations of sources, but also some evaluation which did not go far beyond simply considering the origin of the evidence. When evidence is obtained by personal investigation, this should be evaluated. This was not often done and some of the judgements were not really of an appropriate standard, for example questioning the value of evidence from one expert because she had not responded to the student's e-mails. Evaluation should consider the basis of the evidence and use a variety of critical thinking techniques such as corroboration and identification of strengths and weaknesses in research before higher level marks are awarded.

This should be an opportunity for the student to stand back from the report and consider whether the methodology and the scope of the research was sufficient to justify the conclusions. There is a chance to look at the way research might have modified initial assumptions and judgements, but the focus should be on assessing the conclusions reached. Credit for limited comments such as research was difficult because the relevant books were too expensive to buy or comments on personal interest or difficulties are not really appropriate at this academic level. This is a key part of the critical path and does need some attention from centres.

The points above are intended to guide centres in helping candidates to offer work which has greater depth. There was much to build on in terms of independent research, commitment and genuine interest and explanation. Centres are thanked for encouraging candidates to undertake these reports which offer very valuable experience of higher level and independent research and are of immense personal and educational value.