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# FOREWORD

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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.**

# GENERAL PAPER

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## GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8001/01

General Paper

### General comments

The selection of questions demonstrated that candidates had a sufficiently wide and stimulating choice on this year's papers. The evidence of planning was apparent and those candidates who did employ this technique seemed to have a discernible structure to their essays. There are candidates who insist on using a list approach, or numbered points; this is not appropriate in an academic essay, though could be utilised towards the end of an essay if time is running out.

Introductions and conclusions are still a little problematical for some. A common feature of a weak introduction is a chatty and anecdotal approach to the topic that is not then linked to the ensuing paragraphs. Conclusions are not utilised in the most effective way, to summarise points or opinions that have been reached throughout the course of the essay, but often merely repeat material word for word from previous paragraphs. Practice in writing summary paragraphs might help to improve in this area.

Examiners do look for an attempt at balance within responses, especially in questions where opinion is being sought, for example, **Questions 2, 4, 8, 11** from 8001. One-sided statements that follow one particular avenue cannot gain the highest marks available.

Examiners are alarmed to note an increase in candidates' allegiance to television and the Internet, rather than to reading, which manifests itself in a journalistic style of expression. Reading of quality newspapers, magazines and books is important for those who wish to succeed in General Paper, as it assists their written eloquence and tone.

### **Use of English**

Examiners have reported quite a divergence in the length of essays this session; many candidates wrote about 500 words, many more wrote twice that amount. Quantity does not necessarily equate with quality and many lost the thread of their arguments: succinct writing is preferable. It was also seen that many candidates had spent a considerable amount of time counting the number of words written.

This time would have been better utilised in editing their essays and eliminating the minor grammatical errors.

All too often, and notably in the longer scripts, candidates adopted a tone more appropriate to everyday conversation with friends, scattering learnt vocabulary and phrases rather at random.

Overlong sentences appear to be less frequent, although many candidates favour the use of the comma and the slash, and there was a rising incidence this year of abbreviations. Again this has the effect of robbing the essay of gravitas.

Tone and fluency were sometimes inhibited by the use of inappropriate phrases such as '*I want to write...*' and '*I forgot to mention...*'

Although many are successful in linking paragraphs, others find this more difficult. Candidates might improve in this area by the practice of writing essays and then analysing how well the language flows.

The attention of candidates should be drawn to the recommendation to use black or dark blue ink, and to ensure that their handwriting can be read.

## Content

In every question there are key or command words. These include 'discuss', 'assess', 'how far', 'agree?', 'is this fair comment?'

These should indicate that a degree of discussion, reflecting various factors or types of factual information, is required. Certainly when the word 'fair' is included, agreement or disagreement is demanded. Some questions do require a decision to be made and candidates try to prevaricate, seemingly reluctant to come down on one side or the other.

It is typical of many responses to find that the object of the question is not addressed. A word is seized upon and everything that the candidate knows about that is written. A prime example of this was the question on nuclear energy. The vast majority of candidates wrote about nuclear weaponry and the 1945 bombs, and made only passing reference to nuclear production of energy, with the consequence that content marks had to be low. No matter how factually accurate or informed a response is, if it is not relevant, candidates cannot achieve high marks.

Exemplification is more widespread than in the past, but there are still Centres where candidates are not being advised to provide examples where possible. The question on young people's magazines and the question on works of art are cases in point. Local exemplification is interesting for Examiners to read, and rewarded positively.

In questions concerned with warfare, it is understandable that candidates will want to express personal feelings, but they should be careful to couch their viewpoints in a non-emotive manner and to try to present alternative viewpoints as a balance.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

*Do small firms have a role in modern business?*

Most candidates understood the intention behind this question and it was a straightforward topic, especially for students of economics. Occasionally such candidates did become rather preoccupied with economic terminology, and even more with a comparison with monopolies, which were given a disproportionate amount of space.

Examiners received some germane and thoughtful responses to this question. The role of niche markets and the personal service and flexibility of small firms were highlighted. Sadly, not many local examples were offered, nor in the larger company coverage either, which would have strengthened answers.

There was a thought frequently expressed that all small businesses want to become competitive with the multi-nationals, but once again there was no supporting evidence, even of a tentative nature.

On the whole this was a question that neither produced very low nor top scoring marks. Responses would have been more successful with greater exemplification.

### Question 2

*'History repeats itself.' Do you agree?*

There was a considerable uptake here by candidates who wanted to write solely about the pugilistic nature of man. This was a question where candidates often referred to the war with Iraq, but their argument tended to be emotive and one-sided.

The fundamental thrust of the question was whether man himself has changed in the light of his historical experiences, and only a handful of candidates perceived this.

It had been hoped that something other than war would be considered. Even within that narrow aspect there was no examination of the cyclical versus the evolutionary, merely a diatribe against the dictators of the world, from Hitler to Bush.

Many appeared to rewrite the question and answered instead – Wars are a frequent occurrence, do you agree?

**Question 3**

*To what extent is formal education effective?*

This was a popular question.

It was one that needed definition of terminology at the outset, which was not often present, and it soon became apparent that there was confusion about what was meant by 'formal' education. Some candidates thought it was a differentiation of type of schools; some thought it meant vocational courses; some even thought that 'formal' education was that which took place in their homeland, contrasting it to 'informal' education that takes place in overseas colleges.

Almost all candidates made the link between education and the opportunity to gain employment and a future. The dangers of illiteracy are well understood.

There was some interesting criticism of too rigid a curriculum, and of inflexible teaching styles and a discussion of the idea that it is only by conformity that a society can progress. Such mature and thoughtful responses gained good content marks.

Commentary was also forthcoming from some Centres about the disparity between the education provided in rural areas compared to the urban scope.

Candidates who went on to contrast formal education with informal education, via the family, peers, media and/or general societal influences, were able to gauge the effectiveness required in the wording of the question.

For an ostensibly dry topic the range of perceptive and enlightened responses was most encouraging.

**Question 4**

*'The only victims of war are the poor or the innocent.'* Discuss.

This was a popular question and one that many candidates interpreted in a loose manner, ignoring the word 'only' and writing more about war than about the victims of war.

It also tended to elicit a very emotive and immature response, with lengthy descriptive passages, employing lurid detail, about the atrocities that we can all watch from the comfort of our homes via the television.

Certainly a definition of the poor and the innocent might have prompted a clearer focus on the topic. Too often candidates merely repeated the two terms, contrasting their plight to the rich and the leadership, all of whom would be safe and away from the action of war. This was an over-simplification.

Some, however, did amplify their responses with an examination of the effects of war on the economy, the environment and fighting troops, which was positively rewarded, as it showed a breadth of understanding and some range beyond the obvious two categories.

Exemplification was somewhat limited. The World Wars of the twentieth century did feature, but more emphasis was placed upon the recent events in Afghanistan and Iraq. This led inevitably to rhetoric, and emotive commentary, rather than clear discussion.

There were pockets of perceptive and sound analysis, however, from some Centres. An example of this was a Centre where informed discussion took place on the Maoist civil war.

The intention of the question had been to promote an argument about the effects of warfare on all society, no matter what the echelon. Emotional, economic, material and psychological damage can be caused by war, as quality of life is diminished.

**Question 5**

*Can the use of nuclear energy be justified?*

The responses to this question fell into two distinct categories. There were those that became far more involved with a reinterpretation of the question, substituting nuclear *potential* and that in terms of weaponry, for 'energy'. These candidates wrote at length about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the threat to the world of nuclear confrontation and the terrorist subversion that could ensue from the gaining of 'dirty' nuclear weapons. These essays tended to be emotive and impassioned, with only a fleeting dalliance with relevance, when they considered the issue of nuclear waste material.

By contrast there were some excellent essays that dealt with what was a clearly worded and straightforward question. There was some exploration of energy in weapon potential, perhaps through the inclusion of nuclear powered submarines at the least. The main intention, though, was an examination of power supply, in the era of fossil fuel depletion, and the attendant factors of safety, waste disposal, efficiency and costs.

Some essays were competent in their discussion of the recent history of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, and tension between nations over the gaining of a nuclear potential that could be subverted for military use. Some candidates went further, to examine the viability of nuclear energy when compared to the greener alternatives.

**Question 6**

*Assess the factors which affect the distribution of population in your country.*

A very few candidates misread the wording of this question – some wrote ignoring the words 'your country' and wrote about global shifting populations due to migration or the brain drain; others took the question to mean population control and wrote about means of controlling, as in China. These were few but notable.

Generally, though, this was a competently answered question and appeared to appeal beyond the cohort of geography students.

Responses were well exemplified, providing information about demographic principles, features of climate, infrastructure, education and health facilities, employment opportunities, and patterns of migration with rural/urban shifts. Some candidates made reference to actual distribution within their country, naming specific areas, and there was occasionally inclusion of some other social factors, which made essays more far ranging. Examples of these factors came from religious influences and health imperatives.

**Question 7**

*Can mathematics be made fun, interesting and worthwhile?*

There were few responses to this question.

Candidates who did answer this tended to concentrate on the 'worthwhile' element at the expense of the other two concepts. Their argument could have been an answer to 'is mathematics relevant to people today?', and gave the predictable response – yes, because we all have to go shopping and be able to check the change given to us.

Candidates might have dealt with the challenge to our intellect presented by mathematics. In addition perhaps some thought could have been given to games, puzzles, mind teasers, particular mental dispositions, and numeracy being as important as literacy.

**Question 8**

*Which should be medicine's main priority – the quality or the length of life?*

Some candidates misinterpreted this question and took it to mean the shelf-life of medicine, which restricted the content of their essays.

A common weakness in the responses to this was an inability to make a decision, which is clearly required by the wording of the question. Many made a valid point that an increased quality of life does tend to lead to longevity, this was juxtaposed with the life of poverty frequently leading to premature death.

There were some solid responses that looked at the efficacy and morality of cloning and transplants, and euthanasia.

Few examined the area of problems arising from a longer life, in terms of an ageing population, dependence, economic independence etc.

It was clear that no candidate saw the ethical implications of artificially prolonging life, via life support machines.

On the whole, although this was a question chosen by many, it had only limited development by most.

### **Question 9**

*Assess the value of young people's magazines today.*

This was a question expected to have a wide appeal for candidates, magazines being an obvious feature of youth culture. It was disappointing that the responses that it produced, by and large, were uninspired and bland. Many of the essays were mere lists of features within a young person's magazine and there was no engagement with the potential dynamism.

Some candidates did comment on the unhealthy obsession that magazines have with celebrity status, but failed to develop any analysis of this salient observation. Even more remarkably, there were few examples offered to support the argument, though the possibilities were numerous.

A lack of exemplification was a key weakness in the majority of essays on this topic. Equally, the words 'assess' and 'value' were not addressed adequately; lists predominated, quality was not measured.

### **Question 10**

*How far should the media of any society reflect the views of its leaders?*

This was a question that was rarely attempted.

Candidates could have considered the possibility that any leadership of a nation needs to have a 'voice' in order to be able to reach the maximum number of people within the society.

The media need to be independent, able to perform the function of informing and entertaining, rather than a tool controlled by the authorities. Yet the media exist in an environment that is commercially driven, therefore this could have a direct bearing on the way that they perform.

In an 'ideal' world, the media need to be free of censorship, exploitation and ownership. As we do not live in such a world, the best that can be hoped for is media impartiality, with the ability to provoke and stimulate, and to champion causes in a democratic setting.

The question focused on the freedom of media within democratic societies, or the curtailment of liberty through non-democratic societies, though other aspects would also have been worthy of discussion.

### **Question 11**

*'All works of art belong in their country of origin.' Discuss.*

Again this was a question that had very few responses.

The term 'works of art' had a broad remit, it could refer to art on canvas, to statues, to sculpture, even to illustrated manuscript. It should refer to something of aesthetic value. Exemplification was going to be a prerequisite in any response to this question.

Discussion could have ensued about the rarity value, the antiquity of an artefact or a modern work of art, in terms of the cultural ownership beyond the person who created it.

This was intended as a free response type of topic or question, with an intended appeal to the artists among the candidature.

**Question 12**

*Is the money spent on museums well spent?*

There were few responses to this question. Those who did select it were able to comment on the function of a museum to be a crucial custodian of culture and history within a society, offering this function to both local and international visitor alike.

Many were able to identify the educational role that museums have today, in the context of allowing a more personal reaction to aspects of history that far surpass the written word in text books.

Only a few candidates went on to examine the more prosaic aspect of museums, the fact that they are costly – temperature control, security, staffing and maintenance of buildings – seeming not to occur to most.

Some did contemplate the alternative uses that the money spent on museums could have been put towards, but in rather idealistic terms, for example, the relief of the poor orphan and the disabled elderly person blighted by the callousness of his/her family.

Few perceived or identified the very real link between ourselves and our heritage.

Paper 8001/02

Paper 2

**General comments**

For the first time in this paper's history, **Question 1** was not the automatic choice for the great majority of candidates since both **Question 2** and **Question 3** attracted considerable interest throughout the range of Centres. It seems, therefore, that candidates, at long last, are prepared to read through the whole paper and to consider the alternatives to the traditional comprehension exercise before taking up their pens. In the event, performance closely reflected ability in **Question 1** but was far less predictable in the two other assignments. In the case of **Question 2**, sensible conclusions were often based on the wrong premises so that claims were made about the most and least suitable contestants that simply could not be sustained. Candidates, therefore, who soundly appreciated certain characteristics of the group under scrutiny still presented fundamentally flawed arguments because they had not worked out the implications of some of the other material that needed investigation. As regards **Question 3**, there is no doubt that many candidates wanted to join in the smoking debate. This they did, but on their own terms rather than on those of the exercise, which required linguistic analysis and critical thinking as well as the more usual interpretative skills. Doubtless, if this kind of assignment is set again, candidates will have more of an idea of what is expected of them and will be on their guard against irrelevance and preconceptions. That said, many clearly relished the challenge of a new kind of exercise.

Whichever question was attempted, there was no evidence that any save the weakest candidates were pressed for time. As always, the most successful candidates were the most economical, considerable thought having gone into the relatively few words they wrote by way of each final version which materialized after a series of rough notes. Equally praiseworthy but much less effective were those candidates who produced practically identical drafts, the eventual one being hardly an improvement on the first. In their case, one can but hope that practice will make perfect as they develop their critical faculties. Those candidates, however, who fondly imagined that they knew better than the Examiners, when it came to the length of an answer, and that word-limits were there to be disregarded, did so at their peril, as has been pointed out previously. In this paper, it has to be stressed, it is never necessary to repeat or labour a point which may be worth no more than the odd mark within the total allocation for any particular question. Instead, candidates should comb the material provided, before committing themselves to paper, to ensure that their answers are as comprehensive as possible, with nothing overlooked.

Candidates tend to write too much, which remains a major problem, but the indiscriminate reuse of words, phrases and even sentences from the paper seems to be on the decline. This year, the explicit instructions to candidates to use their own words as far as possible and these seem to have been heeded in many instances although 'labour-intensive', 'social conditioning' and 'locally available materials' still crept into some answers to **Question 1** while many responses to **Question 2 (a)** and **Question 3** resorted to direct quotation and little else. The commendable endeavour to get away from the wording of the paper did, of course, lead many weaker candidates to engage in literal, word-by-word translation but the worst that could be said of it was that it was inclined to be stilted and somewhat unidiomatic. Gross carelessness was usually avoided, meaning was seldom in doubt, while only a handful of scripts were illegible. In the higher echelons, there was much work which was a pleasure to read. Finally, it was gratifying to note that hardly any candidates were misguided enough to tackle more than one out of the three questions or to provide more than six definitions and six illustrative sentences in **Question 1 (d)(i)** and **Question 1 (d)(ii)**. On balance, therefore, one can record an overall improvement in examination technique, which is very much to be welcomed.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

The passage set for comprehension and comment was a factual account of the evolution of toys. Much of the subject matter, therefore, was well within the experience of all the candidates who, on occasion, were invited to contribute ideas of their own. This they were disinclined to do although they were anxious to show that they had understood what they had read.

- (a) Candidates usually managed to explain, albeit without qualification, two or three ways in which folk toys differed from those that were mass produced but they tended to repeat the same material in other words rather than search for further points. In particular, they could not abandon the contrast between toys that were made by hand at home and those that were manufactured on an industrial basis. Some candidates attached far too much significance to the cheap plastic replicas of original artefacts, which, in fact, were simply one category of mass-produced toy.
- (b) Weaker candidates could not distinguish between electronic games and all toys powered by electricity or between electronic games and all mass-produced toys. In the latter instance, they relied heavily on the set passage rather than branching out on their own and, in consequence, introduced irrelevant material such as the extensive advertising involved in promoting any sort of mass-produced toy nowadays. When the terms of the question were complied with, the level of success depended on the sophistication of individual points and how effectively they were balanced within the stipulated word-limit.
- (c) Some original thinking went into this answer but, by and large, candidates were reluctant to reflect on their own experience of toys as distinct from what was stated in the passage. When it came to hunting for relevant material in the text, there was a tendency to concentrate on social norms, which were illustrated at length and to the exclusion of other considerations such as physical growth, mental reflexes, imagination or the need for a secure environment in which to develop. As noted earlier, a fair number of candidates fell back on 'lifting' when confronted by this relatively formidable assignment.
- (d)(i) Few difficulties were encountered when it came to defining 'perspective' (though it was sometimes confused with 'prospective'), 'means', 'specific' and 'transmit'. Candidates, though, were inclined to proffer 'many' as a synonym of 'diverse' and 'modern' as a synonym of 'sophisticated' without further elaboration. Both 'labour-intensive' and 'interactive' proved too complex for all but the most thoughtful.
- (ii) As ever, a handful of candidates misunderstood the rubric and composed sentences which contained the explanation rather than the original word. Rather more were careless over the form of the word they incorporated, 'transmitted' or even 'diversify' standing in for 'transmit' and 'diverse'. As usual, some candidates lost marks when sentences were so brief that they allowed substitution of alternative meaning as in 'She wore a *sophisticated* dress' where 'simple' or 'blue' or 'wedding' would make equal sense. Again, a good few candidates, either through faulty syntax or punctuation or because they were desperate to impress, wrote more than one sentence on each occasion. In general, though, this perennial exercise was handled with a fair degree of assurance.



**Question 2**

Presumably, most candidates, at one time or another, have watched a television general knowledge quiz and have observed which competitors were the most successful and which were the least. Furthermore, in preparing for this examination, they would have encountered one exercise or another that entailed assessing the merits or otherwise of a small number of applicants for some position or activity. The first three assignments, therefore, in this question should have had a familiar ring about them even if the fourth broke new ground.

- (a) Virtually everyone was able to pick out relevant desiderata such as a reliable memory or self-confidence from the material that was provided but relatively few candidates made bricks from straw by bringing such requirements to life within the context of a quiz competition. Faulty examination technique was in evidence when some candidates wasted precious words by stating the obvious, namely, that a competition was going to be held and that they were going to describe the qualities needed by an ideal contestant. Others engaged in an exhaustive analysis of the different types of question that featured in such a quiz, which precluded discussion of anything else. All the same, most candidates secured several marks in this particular exercise.
- (b)(c) In each question, a few unfortunate candidates elected to write on more than one contestant. Others endeavoured to home in on the most or least suitable competitor by a process of elimination, an impossible task within the word-limit. When some candidates failed to identify the contestant they had in mind, marks were still awarded if it was obvious which one was being investigated. There were, of course, no 'right' or 'wrong' choices of contestant to be made though it was harder to justify some than others, particularly if the information provided had been misinterpreted. For example, candidates who supported Contestant B on the grounds of that person's constant exposure to television should have made sure that they knew what '*seldom* watches' meant before basing their claim on that evidence. They were on firmer ground when they cited Contestant B's competitiveness but had not thought hard or long enough when they equated academic prizes with extensive general knowledge and mathematical brilliance with being a polymath.

Turning to the least popular contestant, the most common mistake was to assume that, because little relevant was known of Contestant D, what was not known must have been very bad, thereby debarring him from participation in the competition. What was not taken into account was that he, if he was a he, might, for example, have had respectable enough academic qualifications, might have been au fait with the media and might have been reasonably sociable, such details being less remarkable than those that were listed. Be that as it may, Contestant D's absentmindedness, a decided drawback in such a competition, was all too often confused with the far more serious disadvantage of a faulty memory, which could not be attributed to him.

- (d) Nearly every candidate rightly selected a competitor who had not been discussed before but few appreciated what this particular exercise really was aiming at. Some marks could be secured if candidates managed to balance a contestant's strengths and weaknesses without going on to analyse the dilemmas which made assessment difficult but far too many candidates simply concentrated on negative factors, the result being that (d) was argued along similar lines to (c). It may be necessary, at this stage, to point out that candidates would never have been instructed to take two bites of the same cherry in separate questions.

**Question 3**

As mentioned earlier, nothing like this had been set before as a General Paper exercise although the scenario on which it was based raised issues that must have been perfectly familiar to everyone taking this examination. Candidates, therefore, should have spent more time than many did in ascertaining precisely what they had to do. In particular, they should have had second thoughts if it struck them that an identical response was required for (a) and (b). In point of fact, their objectives were entirely different. (a) asked candidates to describe the sort of person each speaker was whereas (b) invited them to discuss how persuasive two of the speakers were.

- (a) The weakest answers failed to infer anything about the personality of the speaker from the opinions they expressed, for their views were simply quoted, paraphrased or summarized with any attempt to analyse character. When a more profitable approach was adopted, candidates, as a rule, realized how stubborn and aggressive the heavy smoker was, sensed the inflexibility of the hard-line non-smoker, made little of the occasional smoker and failed to detect the selfishness behind the apparently tolerant non-smoker.
- (b) Those candidates who did not merely repeat the same tactics that they had pursued in the previous question usually made some attempt to evaluate the arguments used though only the most able went beyond straightforward agreement or disagreement in the light of their own opinions or current knowledge about the effects of smoking. The first speaker's dogmatic and unrealistic attitude towards smoking was generally appreciated far better than the second interviewee's ambivalence, although the point was often made that occasional indulgence could become addiction.
- (c) Candidates almost invariably contrived to explain their own position on smoking with a fair degree of authority but the relationship between their stance and that of the chosen speaker was rarely explored in depth. Instead, it was frequently glossed over on the grounds that the two viewpoints were identical.