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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.**

GENERAL PAPER

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8001/01 and 8004/01-03

Papers 1, 2 and 3

General comments

Many candidates are not gaining higher reward because they do not plan and structure an answer effectively.

A particular problem this session was with introductions to essays. Many candidates would benefit from sharpening the nature of these. An effective introduction will immediately identify the candidate's understanding of the requirements of the question, with the key or command words in that wording acknowledged. Definitions are often a suitable starting point, demonstrating that the candidate fully comprehends what the question is addressing. This is particularly appropriate with terms such as 'economic sanctions' or 'discipline' (to give two examples from this session's question paper).

In presenting an argument it is usually advisable to offer or survey a range of main opinions, with exemplification, and then to come to a clear decision about which is the nearest to the individual writer's personal choice. Giving a sense of balance (often commended by Examiners) is not achieved merely by presenting one argument that is directly contradicted by a following and opposing one, with no sense of discrimination or choice. Presenting an argument in simply black and white terms is not advisable either. One or two pages offering one argument or viewpoint, to be followed by another one or two pages presenting the complete opposite with no sense of conclusion can be a waste of time: this is not balance, it is sitting on the fence.

There are two key aspects of examination technique that would help candidates to maintain focus on the question: the first is the use of a plan at the outset to plot the path that the essay will take; the second is the use, wherever possible, of exemplification. Examiners are always pleased to find local examples in essays, especially when they are contrasted with international examples. This usually reflects a breadth of reading and a mature awareness.

Essays for the General Paper should have a higher *analytical* content than a descriptive one. Examiners are seeking informed opinion, not personal prejudice and not narrative commentary.

Mere re-writing of learned quotations (many from Shakespeare were seen this session) is seldom effective if deployed carelessly (especially if unattributed). More seriously, over-reliance on 'prepared' material is always dangerous. The nature of the syllabus means that there are obviously topic areas in the questions that might be predicted and general preparation on these is prudent. However, to try to regurgitate lengthy passages that have been learned by heart is never advisable. Questions on particular topic areas are worded differently from session to session with accordingly different emphases. For high marks, a good answer will demonstrate some sense of *personal* response as well as an informed one.

Candidates are expected to write in a suitably academic (not 'conversational') style using an essay format. Unfortunately many are using inappropriate style and register in their writing. Some even break their work into short numbered bullet points or numbered sections – which is likewise entirely inappropriate for this examination. (It is fine for a plan of course.)

Some elementary problems with punctuation, grammar and spelling mean that many candidates failed to score well in the Use of English element. Many seemed unaware that the subject and the verb of a sentence need to agree. There was much haphazard use and confusion of the definite and indefinite article. Many candidates relied too heavily on using abbreviations. Incorrect or inappropriate plurals of words seemed to cause more than usual difficulty this session too; a frequently noticed example was 'the latters'.

Issues of presentation

The front page of the examination paper states clearly that correction fluid must not be used, yet many candidates use this freely. Neat crossing out is perfectly acceptable. As always, candidates should be reminded that writing in pale ink is to be avoided.

On Syllabus 8004 there are clear instructions about the number of questions to be attempted and the fact that no more than one question may be taken from any one section. Some candidates are failing to follow this rubric and depriving themselves of marks.

It would assist Examiners greatly if candidates could note on the front page of their answer booklets the numbers of the question(s) attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 (Syllabuses 8001 and 8004)

Do economic sanctions serve any useful purpose?

Overall this question was generally well answered, despite some vagueness about terminology in many scripts. There was some evidence of confusion about the meaning of the word *sanctions*, with a significant number of candidates interpreting it as meaning any government intervention in the economy, which was too wide of the issue. Others saw 'sanctions' as trade restrictions or protective tariffs.

It was a question that seemed to have particular appeal to candidates of economics and some were able to deploy knowledge of economic theory and terminology, to dazzling effect (although in some cases this was rather gratuitous and inadequately anchored in the terms of the question).

There was a specific political angle to this question, which most did see, and there was accordingly pertinent discussion and commentary about the USA/Iraq situation especially. Essays that confined themselves solely to that example were in the majority, yet there were many other examples that could have been employed, for example, Cuba and Korea.

Question 2 (8001 and 8004)***'A country with no written records has no history.' Is this true?***

There were some well-informed and thoughtful answers to this question. Many candidates took the opportunity to write about the value of history, such as learning from past mistakes and the handing on of cultural identity.

More sophisticated responses went on to write about the value of the oral tradition, clan and tribal tradition, cave paintings and architectural edifices, and museum exhibits (with some interesting answers referring to the Bayeux tapestry, for example).

Few were perceptive enough to highlight the fact that written records may manifest bias.

Question 3 (8001) Question 4 (8004)***'To be different is to be condemned by society.' Is this a fair statement?***

This proved a popular question and the majority of the essays were effective, largely because candidates understood the thrust of the question; they chose the question wisely. The main major issues that were considered in answers were racism, homophobia and religious discrimination: areas that Examiners had expected to find discussed. The better candidates were able to strengthen their essays with examples drawn beyond just one such area.

A few proceeded from a starting point from within the world of nature, that in the animal kingdom creatures that are different are often ostracised. It seemed for many candidates to be a fact of life that conformity is the most acceptable (or safest) mode.

There were some cases where misinterpretation of the points of the question took over, especially in answers which dealt with handicapped people. This may have been an appropriate grouping to consider, but unfortunately too many of the essays merely became a list of the disadvantages and problems faced by the disabled which digressed from the question set.

Question 4 (8001) Question 5 (8004)***Do parents have the right to use any form of discipline they choose?***

This was a very popular question.

Discipline was seen by many in very black and white terms: either parents would talk and reason things through with their children or they would abuse them physically. This made essays somewhat emotive and unbalanced. There are, of course, a variety of other ways in which discipline can be exerted, which were often omitted.

Many candidates deprived themselves of higher reward by choosing to disregard the phrase 'right to choose'.

Many candidates began with a far too lengthy consideration and explanation of what the role of the parent is or should be. This could have and should have been covered in a much shorter space (one paragraph would have been adequate).

It was disheartening once again to read simplistic arguments that parents who both work are inevitably opening their family life to a cycle of drug and alcohol abuse, leading ultimately to prostitution for their children. This argument seems to be presented every session when there is any mention of parents or family in the wording of a question.

Question 5 (8001) Question 6 (8004)***Should every country have the right to possess weapons of war?***

This proved a stimulating question which generally candidates tackled well, although Examiners noted many were selective about which words of the question they would address; due consideration of 'the right' was often lacking.

There was almost universal agreement that weapons are essential for self-defence, with the majority of scripts citing examples to support this assertion. India and Pakistan, the USA and Iraq were the most common areas of discussion, but with widely varying views expressed. This made interesting reading even if the broad consensus that weapons are needed to maintain a balance of (armed) neutrality in our world could make it rather depressing too.

Many candidates distinguished between nuclear and conventional weaponry, and brought this into their arguments in a relevant and valid way. Well-read and perceptive candidates were able to deliberate about how weapons can be used by corrupt regimes.

Question 6 (8001) Question 7 (8004)***'The donation of healthy body parts or organs after death should be compulsory.' Do you agree?***

The majority of candidates came to the conclusion that voluntary donation is preferable to compulsory acquisition, despite the ever escalating need that is not being met, and the illegal traffic in body organs in some parts of the world.

The purpose of having body parts or organs was well understood, beyond the obvious transplant facility.

Religious and ethical objections featured strongly, and these were often especially well voiced.

In general, this question was treated with a praiseworthy sensitivity.

Question 7 (8001) Question 8 (8004)***How important is the conservation of the sea's resources?***

This was a topic that had not been included for some years on the paper and it was pleasing to see how many candidates selected it.

There were varying degrees of knowledge about the relevant issues with some candidates simply writing a descriptive account of the wealth of the seas and all that they can offer to us land-locked human creatures.

Others were able to write about the conservation of fish stocks and preservation of bio-diversity, energy potential, coral reefs and the need to protect the coastal and oceanic areas from inundation from tourism.

Question 8 (8001) Question 10 (8004)***'The benefits of technology are mostly enjoyed by the rich.' Do you agree?***

The very word 'technology' seems to have had a galvanising effect upon candidates, unfortunately often prompting the deployment of an avalanche of material, with every known fact or invention that could come under this umbrella term.

Many candidates could do little more than give a list of expensive luxuries – for example, plasma television, iPods, satellite navigation and Internet services – followed it by a bald statement that the poor cannot afford any of this and will never be able to.

By contrast, some more aware candidates were able to identify the cascade effect that technology can have, for example the older models of cars and of cellphones, early computing systems and resources that are particularly accessible in urban areas. Falling prices were argued to be a key element in the economic dynamic, opening up availability.

Too many, though, saw technology as synonymous with luxury. What about the widely more accessible medical treatment and drugs, due to technological innovation?

Question 9 (8001) Question 11 (8004)***Can offensive language ever be acceptable in music or film?***

This question needed examples to support all opinions and arguments. Many essays failed to provide even one.

Few answers provided more than general expression of concern about the effect of offensive language on the youth of today.

There was no consideration of the creative right to shock, to express with force and conviction to attract attention.

There was a certain amount of pious contemplation of offensive material in rap music, but it did not have the ring of sincerity about it. Rather it appeared to be the kind of opinion that candidates might have believed that Examiners would be likely to espouse.

Censorship was hardly mentioned. And no one put forward the view that this is often the type of language that young people often seem to like to communicate by.

Question 10 (8001) Question 13 (8004)***'Advertising is a modern art form.' Do you agree?***

This was a question that needed at least one definition. Most candidates who chose it were able to write at length about what their understanding of advertising was. However, very few even so much as attempted a simple definition of what 'art form' meant to them, something that was essential for higher marks.

Overall, not many chose this question, and those who did spent their time describing what the function of advertising is, rather than analysing whether it goes beyond into an artistic realm, or whether the two are automatically at odds.

Likewise, hardly any of the essays offered a single example.

Question 11 (8001) Question 14 (8004)***Is learning a foreign language worth the time and effort?***

This was a reasonably popular question.

The advantages were largely interpreted in a utilitarian way, for employment or tourist opportunities, although some candidates did see it as a worthwhile intellectual activity. The aid to cultural understanding and increased tolerance was also cited.

Some candidates chose to redirect the question to the suitability of English as a universal language.

Question 12 (8001) Question 15 (8004)***Can modern design be concerned with beauty in an age of mass production?***

Hardly any candidates selected this question.

Early mechanisation and mass production was an end in itself initially, yet increasingly design has become a more prominent feature. This has evolved to the state that design is often referred to as 'sexy' these days; we need only to look at any car promotion to see this. With the age of sophisticated computer art there are even more opportunities to incorporate design in mass production. These were some of the directions that it had been anticipated that a response to this question could follow, but few candidates took up the opportunity of doing so.

Additional questions for Syllabus 8004**Section 1****Question 3**

Assess the advantages and problems in hosting major international sporting events.

This was a very popular question and there were some high scoring answers. (A key reason here was the fact that candidates who opted for it were confident in their knowledge of and their interest in the topic.)

The significance of sport as an aid to international harmony and relationships was correctly perceived and many candidates gave appropriate and pertinent examples of this, some using experiences from within their own country.

The topics of funding and the boost to tourism and to the infrastructure were all suitably addressed, as was the problem of security in this era.

Many were able to go further and point out that the advantages to the economy and the employment sector might be short lived.

Balance and exemplification were nearly always present.

Section 2**Question 9**

Do national boundaries serve any useful purpose in an increasingly globalised world?

This was rarely attempted.

Those who tackled it were able to define 'globalised world' and tended to write about the escalation of economic and political impetus towards that state.

Few addressed the issue of whether national boundaries are relevant or not any more.

Examiners had expected some historical perspective about how the need for national boundaries evolved, via land acquisition, war, trading partnerships and travel. Continuing contention and military action over boundaries threatens the life of innocent bystanders in areas such as central Europe and parts of the Middle East; areas that, unfortunately, were not considered by the relatively few tackling this question.

Section 3**Question 12**

How important is dance in the life of a nation?

This question was reasonably popular but invariably it was not well done.

Examiners were hoping that the topic of dance as a key aspect of human civilisation through the ages would be treated but it was lacking in answers.

Remarkably no candidates referred to any dance that was unique in their society, but instead discussed the relative merits to health.

Few mentioned local dance and music being potential tourist attractions.

Paper 8001/02**Paper 2****General comments**

Virtually all the candidates were able to finish the paper in the time allowed, while those who were more enterprising attempted to make their assurance double-sure by producing both a preliminary and a final draft whenever that was desirable. In such instances, the candidates' effort was certainly worthwhile, if irrelevant or inappropriate material had been weeded out, after second thoughts had been considered and the whole answer streamlined to comply with the rubric. Once in a while, though, it was difficult to detect any significant difference between the first and the second version. The great majority of candidates, however, seemed content with a single shot at each question which, all too frequently, had not been sufficiently thought through before pen was set to paper.

When it came to what question to attempt, the majority of candidates fought shy of innovation. The traditional comprehension exercise at the start of the paper was tackled by a great many candidates, though whether they chose it because they were convinced it was the easiest option or whether they had looked no further than **Question 1** remains a moot point. As has been stressed in so many previous reports, candidates whose command of English is far from assured should really ask themselves whether it is in their interests to strive to cope with the subtleties of a complex argument, as opposed to the more workaday situations apparent in the two other questions. In the event, relatively few candidates responded to the challenge of novelty, when they evaluated the three letters of dismissal that comprised **Question 2**, but most achieved a fair measure of success. The third question, based on the Wolrac Regional Badminton Tournament, proved extremely popular with those Centres that had prepared candidates for a similar sort of assignment.

Whatever question was chosen, many candidates wrote far too much, far too often with word limits (where they applied) having been completely ignored. It has, therefore, to be emphasised, yet again, that absolutely no credit is given to any valid responses that feature in an answer beyond the stage where it becomes obvious that it is much too lengthy. Once all candidates become aware that it is utterly fruitless to flout the rubric in this respect, it is to be hoped that they will refrain from such practices as including the wording of a question in their answer by way of introduction, labouring a point *ad nauseam* or dragging in subject matter that should have been considered somewhere else.

As far as written expression was concerned, the greatest disappointment, on this occasion, was the large number of candidates who disregarded the injunctions emboldened on the question paper to use their own words as far as possible, and copied out slavishly phrase after phrase from the text, thereby depriving themselves of any marks that would have been awarded for comprehension. In such instances, they also would not have secured much for use of English since the English they used belonged to someone else. Excessive reliance on the wording of the original material, therefore, characterised the weakest answers, whatever exercise had been attempted.

There were, relatively few scripts that were so illegible or so poorly expressed that meaning was a matter of conjecture. At the other extreme, it was by no means uncommon to find candidates writing with great fluency and accuracy in a wide variety of contexts whenever the opportunity arose.

Among the most prevalent errors noted, this session, were the following: the misspelling of 'accommodation', 'furthermore' and 'listener'; the arbitrary use of 'the latter'; confusion between 'accepted' and 'agreed', 'complains' and 'complaints', 'inevitable' and 'avoidable'; and uncertainty over when the definite article should or should not feature.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

More often than not, candidates who reacted to the passage set for comprehension understood the general drift of the argument, however unsuccessfully they struggled with specific detail. The idea of 'bracketing' evidently had some appeal. As a rule, the main obstacle encountered was insufficient linguistic skills to enable them to make the text their own.

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify a fair range of relevant content, though there was a great deal of lifting and duplication. There was also a tendency to ignore the final paragraph which could, in fact, have yielded an additional three points.
- (b) Candidates who concentrated on lines 21 to 27 in the passage were able to merit a respectable enough total mark; but a comprehensive response should also have taken the first two paragraphs into account, even if the pickings were not so plentiful.
- (c) Had candidates homed in on line 20, where the author obligingly states what he means by 'love in the broadest sense of the word', they would have grasped hold of the question which, unfortunately, eluded all but the ablest, with most candidates picking up only the odd incidental mark. Almost invariably, no attempt was made to explain what was implied by 'a manifestation'.
- (d) Whereas nearly everyone had some idea about what was required in the first two exercises, many overlooked the 'too frightened' or 'resistance to fear' element in this particular question and regurgitated what they had already produced by way of an answer to **Question 1 (b)**. Others seized on one relevant motive and elaborated it at the expense of everything else.
- (e) Only a handful of candidates defined or illustrated more than six words, while the great majority realised that they had to use the same words in both exercises.
- (e)(i) Candidates were seldom wide of the mark in their definitions, none of the prescribed words proving particularly formidable, although 'passive' was sometimes taken out of context and applied to grammar. They did, however, sometimes fail to be precise enough, as when 'agenda' was explained simply as a plan, or 'phenomenon' as an occurrence. 'Unification', too, posed problems for anyone who glossed over the process it implied. As ever, marks could not be gained when the word and the definition related to two different parts of speech, as when 'temporary', an adjective, was treated as a noun.
- (ii) It was rare for words to be illustrated in a totally inappropriate way, 'phenomenon' being frequently linked with the tsunami, 'passive' being applied to smoking and 'temporary' being yoked with employment. But candidates deprived themselves of marks when more than one sentence was written in each instance, when the selected word was used in a different grammatical form, as in 'phenomenal', or when the sentence was too short to be unequivocal, as in 'He is too passive (idle, cowardly, shy...) to be a good leader'. As always, candidates who failed to define a word adequately in **Question 1 (e)(i)** quite often contrived to pass muster when using it in a familiar context.

Question 2

It is emphasised that there was no 'correct' response to any of the three letters terminating the contract of Pierre Nosperne with Nonsuch Garages. In the event, candidates tended to prefer the catalogue of misdemeanours to the other two. Although there was far less 'lifting' in this assignment than in **Question 1** or **Question 3**, candidates were far more at home with the factual content than with the tone and style of each draft. It might be claimed that they lacked the vocabulary to deal with some of the finer nuances while they clearly misunderstood the odd piece of information. Faulty examination technique was evident in response to **Question 2 (a)** and **(b)** when candidates failed to concentrate on the draft they had selected for attention, and instead wasted words discussing the other two, making little headway at all. In an entirely different league, those candidates who, in answering **Question 2 (a)** and **(b)**, applied the rubric 'would you be most/least likely to send' to their own personalities succeeded in bringing both assignments to life and wrote with relish and enjoyment.

- (a)** Understandably enough, the low-key, informal Draft 1 attracted little support and, when it did, it was because Pierre Nosperne was thought to be far more deserving than the data supplied further on would suggest. When it came to Draft 2, the merit of its appropriate tone and format was rarely appreciated, though the more discerning candidates realised that it was the golden mean between too much and too little detail. By way of contrast, the categorical and impersonal nature of Draft 3 found much favour with candidates. The most successful saw it in terms of the legal position should the sacked manager seek redress. A fair proportion, though, laid far too much emphasis on the charges against Pierre Nosperne and far too little on how they were recorded, their approach being descriptive rather than analytical.
- (b)** In the main, those who objected to Draft 1 did so for perfectly sound reasons, concluding that it was much too casual and conciliatory. There were, however, no grounds for arguing that 'we are not a charitable organisation' was a crude insult. As regards Draft 2, candidates could well maintain that a wider perspective should have been taken into consideration, but they were unreasonable to challenge the refusal to supply references while they missed the point entirely when they felt that Pierre Nosperne was entitled to attend his grandmother's funeral, as he had done 'on four previous occasions'. Draft 3 rarely came in for adverse criticism although a good case could have been made against it. A few candidates, however, did feel that it was too harsh, given the length of service of Pierre Nosperne.
- (c)** Most candidates made quite a respectable showing at this juncture. Full marks, however, were seldom secured because candidates dwelt on one sterling quality to the detriment of everything else or simply strung together desiderata. The weakest described the specific tasks that Mr. Laveur should undertake rather than what kind of manager he should be. One or two unfortunates confused 'Trainee Manager' with 'Trainer Manager' and produced entirely irrelevant answers.
- (d)** Marks again were needlessly sacrificed when candidates discussed more than one 'least serious failing' or the 'last serious failing' on the part of Pierre Nosperne. When they complied with the requirements of the question, the most shrewd opted for untidy appearance. Credit was also given to those who cited filthy toilets or rudeness to staff as long as they presented a convincing case, as they usually did with damage to a customer's car during screen-washing. Only the most careless or misguided failed to appreciate the gravity of loss of takings through theft from an unlocked safe or unattended car.

Question 3

Questions outlining three courses of action have frequently made an appearance in this paper. On occasions when such an assignment has been set, candidates have tended to select the right material for each option even if they have neglected to justify or develop what they have introduced. This year, however, the points that would have done yeoman service in **Question 3 (c)**, such as the ill feeling between Voscar and Yoljic, kept straying into the earlier answers. There was also considerable confusion between income and profit and over the amounts involved. In various contexts, the significance or lack of it of malaria, quarantine, screening and even daisies did not register with the less able. Nevertheless, any candidate who adopted a structured approach was bound to score consistently.

- (a) Careless reading of the text accounted for several untenable claims. Whereas an able candidate would rightly conclude that competitors could be affected by the virus in that it attacked 'the young and active as well as the rest of the population', there was nothing to suggest that it was mainly this section of the community that was at risk. By the same token, air travel might be frowned upon at this critical time, because the WHO had strongly advised against it, but it might still be possible for the contestants since it had not actually been banned, contrary to the belief of some candidates. Again, Voscar had already borrowed and presumably invested money to stage the Wolrac Regional Badminton Tournament and, hence, could not possibly divert one million Wolrac dollars to earthquake relief, as was so often asserted.
- (b) There were fewer misapprehensions evident when candidates argued for the status quo, though a fair number mistakenly claimed that badminton was the most popular sport in Voscar while others blandly assumed that, because malaria had been treated successfully, the new, unrelated virus would soon be cured. As in **Question 3 (a)**, though, it was rare for candidates to make much of the points that they had selected, the exception being the one that concerned the projected income of five million Wolrac dollars, which was generally regarded as a good thing.
- (c) Financial concerns apart, most candidates came to terms with and attempted to put flesh on the relevant material that supported the case for a limited competition although the connotations of an agreement 'in principle' escaped all but the best.
- (d) As with **Question 2 (d)**, there were some arbitrary and unjustified choices, the weakest candidates selecting statements that had been central to their argument in the earlier questions. On the other hand, when malaria, racism or daisies came to the fore, their irrelevance was usually plausibly presented.