

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 8987/11

Written Paper

Key Messages

- Candidates should ensure they read the question carefully and answer the actual question set.
- The length of the answer should reflect the number of marks available. Many candidates spend too long on **Question 1**.
- The key skill, particularly on the last question, needed to score high marks is that of comparative evaluation, supported by precise reference to the passage and in relation to the actual question set.
- **Question 2** required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison of the content and evaluate the provenance, content and perspectives to reach an overall judgement. This question brings together the skills that have been tested individually in the previous questions.
- Brief and relevant quotations from the documents should be used to support arguments otherwise the answer is generalised or no more than a series of assertions or claims and will not reach the higher levels. This is crucial in **Questions 2 and 3**.
- Candidates will not gain credit by bringing in material from outside the documents.
- The strongest responses reached a supported judgement about the issue under consideration.

General Comments

The overall standard of the responses was very encouraging. There was no evidence of candidates misunderstanding the passages and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. There were a number who did not pay careful attention to either the marks available or the command words in the questions and this limited the level achieved, particularly when it came to Questions 2 and 3. However, it is encouraging to see that an increased number of candidates are able to apply the higher level skill of comparative evaluation on the final question, although there are still a number who rely on solely comparing the content of the two documents. Stronger answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner. There were very few candidates who ran out of time, although the allocation of time is an important issue.

There were a significant number of candidates who wrote over a side for **Questions 1a**, whereas a few lines or even four bullet points would have been sufficient. As a result, some answers to the final question were brief and ideas were either not fully developed or supported by precise reference to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents demonstrating that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being considered and reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) (i) The question required candidates to identify four dangers that Document 1 suggests might result from the development of synthetic biology. When a question asks candidates to 'identify' they can simply copy or lift short pieces of text from the document that support the issue in the question; there is certainly no requirement for them to explain or evaluate the material and will not gain any extra marks. The question is designed to ensure that candidates read the document carefully and have a clear understanding (comprehension) of it, testing a lower level skill than other questions and therefore it would be unreasonable for Examiners to expect ideas to be developed or explained. However, there are still a significant number of candidates who appear to ignore the command word and develop their ideas about the dangers or comment on the validity of the dangers raised by the authors. This often has a detrimental impact on later answers as they have

spent a disproportionate amount of time on the question and do not have the time needed to plan the structure and develop their arguments for the later questions which test more demanding skills. Most candidates were able to identify four dangers and made reference to issues such as 'pathogens', the 'threat to genetic conservation and biodiversity', a lack of regulation and the ability of almost anyone to construct genes from scratch and the potential danger created by that. It was this latter point that often led candidates to develop their ideas with some suggesting that it was not that simple and therefore was less of a danger.

- (b) This question elicited a wide range of responses and there were a number of candidates who struggled with the demands of the question, failing to focus on the evidence in Document 1 or not producing a balanced answer, with many focusing entirely on the weaknesses and thus not reaching the top marks. Although it is difficult to argue against the view that most of the evidence given in Document 1 is weak, it was expected that candidates would make some valid points about possible strengths of the evidence, such as the open letter which supports the view that some did have concerns about the developments in synthetic biology. The question carried only six marks and therefore Examiners did not expect every point to be developed but rewarded highly where candidates did develop their points about particular pieces of evidence. Many answers did focus on the reliance on assertion and commented on the overall lack of precise evidence to support the claims made, but in some instances they did not support this claim by reference to actual parts of the document, which would have strengthened their claim. Comments such as 'without debate' or 'just about anyone' provided opportunities for candidates to comment on the lack of support and stronger answers did take up this opportunity. Where candidates did reach a judgement as to 'how strong', most concluded that the evidence was not very strong and some used the frequent use of words such as 'could' or 'might' to support their argument, which further strengthened the response.

Question 2

It was important that candidates focused on the 'reasoning' of the document and not simply the evidence, as although there will inevitably be some overlap as the weakness of the evidence impacts on the reasoning; this has been tested in the previous question. The focus on reasoning should have made it easier for candidates to consider both the strengths and weaknesses, which is essential if the highest level is to be accessed. Stronger answers tended to take a more thematic approach considering the powerful nature of the argument given the apparent dangers and lack of regulation, but then went on to note that these claims are no more than assertions as there was no evidence to support them. Similarly some responses debated the use of emotive language, suggesting that it was a strength because it prevented debate, appearing to make the case against synthetic biology cut and dried, whilst the use of emotive language, such as 'wild west' or 'bio-terror' and 'bio-error' appeared to suggest exaggeration and thus detract from the actual argument. The very strongest answers then reached a judgement about the emotive language and whether it made the reasoning stronger or weaker. There was a great deal that candidates could consider; the issue of the lack of evidence to support the claims featured strongly in most answers, and although this inevitably led to overlap with the previous question this was acceptable provided in this question it was used to focus on the question of reasoning; further evidence of the need to read the question carefully and focus on the key words and phrases. There were some responses that picked up on the possible counter argument with the benefits of synthetic biology such as bio-fuels, but few were able to develop this point and suggest that by appearing to consider a counter argument it strengthened the reasoning.

Question 3

As in previous examination series candidates continue to find this the most demanding question, however it was pleasing to see that an increasing number were going beyond a simple comparison of the content of the two documents and attempting to evaluate them. Despite this improvement, it is important that responses do simply evaluate the documents in isolation, but in relation to the actual question set. This question brings together the skills that have been tested on earlier questions, but unfortunately are frequently ignored when tackling this question. It is worth repeating previous advice that as this is the most demanding question, candidates would be well advised to allow a disproportionate amount of time to address it. It might help candidates if they produced a plan, which indicated how the points and evaluation relate to the actual question. Candidates should also check to ensure that they have reasonably balanced coverage to the two documents as there were a number, who having evaluated Document 1 in the previous question, chose to either ignore it or treat it in a superficial manner. Once again, candidates would be well advised to support their arguments by precise reference to the documents, but need to avoid lengthy quotations that detract from the overall argument. The strongest answers adopted a thematic approach, evaluating the two documents in relation to the actual theme, reached interim judgements about the relative strength of the two

documents in relation to the theme before concluding with an overall judgement about the question.

Some strong answers outlined their views about the issue in the question in their opening paragraph, then pursued this line throughout their response, leaving the Examiner in no doubt about the direction of answer. This is illustrated in the following response which stated that:

'Document 2, is on the whole more convincing than Document 1 because it manages to convince the reader that PGD is not wholly unethical, because it has the potential to produce 'life-saving tissue for an existing child.' This argument, on face value and through its strong appeal to emotion appears much stronger than that pursued in Document 1, which relies mostly on assumptions.'

This is a strong start as the answer not only outlines their line of argument, but also raises some of the issues, such as the appeal to emotion and lack of supporting evidence that will be developed in the remainder of the answer. It is further strengthened by the use of a short, but relevant quotation from Document 2 which helps to show the Examiner that the response has a firm grasp of the article and is able to use information from it to support their argument.

Most candidates were able to make some valid comment about the relative value of the two documents in terms of their origin, comparing the value of an article from ETC. with a peer reviewed article in a respected Journal. Many stronger answers also considered the overall view of the two documents, but also the limitations of each. The following response acknowledged that Document 2 was limited by its reliance on one specific example:

'Document 2 successfully challenges the perspective of Document 1 that genetic engineering does more harm than good, pointing out that the potential benefits outweigh the costs, a claim Document 1 fails to refute. Document 2 conclusively outlines why genetic engineering is acceptable and not primarily a threat, thus challenging the view of document 1, although Document 2's logic, though strong, is limited by its focus on one particular use, and does not justify uses of genetic engineering where the threat is not the devaluing of the product, but rather the threat that life poses to others as is the case with bio-weapons.'

Discussion of the limits to both documents should be encouraged as it results in a more balanced overall judgement, rather than simply suggesting that one document is strong and the other weak; a response more typical of lower level answers.

Candidates often focused on the appeal to emotion or the use of emotive language and this often provided a useful point for comparative evaluation. Candidates often made reference to the use of words such as 'bio-terror' and 'bio-error' in Document 1 and compared that with the use of words such as 'fatal' in Document 2 to argue that both documents were weakened in their reliability, but perhaps strengthened in their appeal by the use of such words. Once again, this balanced discussion was a feature of stronger responses, as was a discussion of the use and development of counter argument.

Strong answers were often able to bring together their interim judgements in an overall conclusion, but one in which the shortcomings of both documents were acknowledged, as shown in the following example:

'Therefore overall, Document 2 is more convincing than Document 1 in its argument that biotechnology should be further developed because it is ethically and politically beneficial because it considers a range of factors before reaching a substantial conclusion. This contrasts with Document 1 which is based on flawed assumptions and despite the flaws in Document 2, that it lacks statistical evidence to support its claims that PGD should be developed further to save lives, it uses credible sources like Kant, unlike Document 1, making its perspective on genetic research much more convincing.'

This conclusion was not lengthy, but it did draw on earlier points made and therefore the overall judgement was based on a line of argument that had already been established and was therefore consistent.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 8987/12

Written Paper

There were too few candidates for us to be able to write a meaningful report.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 8987/13

Written Paper

There were too few candidates for us to be able to write a meaningful report.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 8987/02

Essay

Key Messages

- Centres need to remember to label candidates' files correctly as explained in the document *Submitting Global Perspectives Work to Cambridge*, available on the Teacher Support Site and on CIEDirect.
- Titles should always take the form of a question.
- A good choice of exemplar sources is a significant advantage in that it helps set up a convincing argument.
- Candidates need to address the limitations of their sources and the need for further research.

General Comments

There was much to praise during this series. Centres have clearly taken on board the need to encourage their candidates to choose topics that really interest them. The result was some thoughtful and insightful responses.

The vast majority of essays were within word limit, which is rigorously enforced. Examiners do not read beyond the 2000 words. Given that reflections, conclusions and awareness of limitations and research often come right at the end of an essay, the occasional over-long response penalised itself. It is noticeable that many strong essays were 100 or 200 words short of the word limit and this is evidence that candidates are able to address the question within the limits set. There were only a few very short essays which tended to lack either width or depth of analysis and evaluation. Another pleasing feature was the quality of the bibliography and citation of sources in the great majority of responses. This is important, and it was good to see candidates taking care with this.

As ever, some Centres had done more to support their candidates in choosing an appropriate question. Previous reports have highlighted the need for candidates to pose themselves a question which sets up a debate between differing global perspectives. It was very noticeable that in some Centres all the candidates knew to do this while in others a significant number did not. Past published materials, including past PERTs (Principal Examiner's Reports to Teachers), have explained this and given examples. To summarise the advice, a sound question might well start with the command word "should". This sets up a question where there are "shoulds" and "should nots": people who would argue both sides clearly. Against this, "to what extent" is less likely to produce an appropriate response, as it is more likely to lead towards a consensus. It is important that a candidate answers a question on which it is possible to produce a strong conclusion and often "to what extent" questions make this difficult. Candidates have a right to their own opinions, their own global perspectives. What is expected is that they should show empathy and respect for those which they do not share. A strong conclusion, therefore, is not only founded on the text of the argument but also – and this is the place for reflection – demonstrates an awareness of the alternate position or positions.

After the careful choice of question, the choice of sources to support each perspective is crucially important. The strongest essays use what could be termed 'exemplar sources' to exemplify the global perspectives being considered. These exemplar sources must be credible. These sources can then be evaluated in the context of the perspective and the wider context of the essay. This can be detailed, if only one source is chosen for each perspective, or less so if a range of sources is marshalled to support each side of the debate. Candidates should avoid evaluating a source out of context, so statements such as "the article lacks credibility because it is more than five years old" adds little if anything to the evaluation of a source, context of an essay or understanding of a global perspective.

The criteria of assessment must be addressed. Candidates who are not clearly aware of these are liable significantly to underachieve. An example of this seen this session was an essay entitled "the plight of Indian

women". The essay took the form of a well-written and engaging overview, but the largely general treatment, coupled with the absence of any specific reference to exemplar sources, meant that the candidate had done very little that could be credited under the assessment criteria as used in the mark scheme. We strongly advise candidates to read the syllabus: it is in the public domain. We also strongly advise candidates to make use of the Outline Proposal Form service. This gives an opportunity for candidates to gain feedback on titles which are unlikely to enable them to address the criteria. There were a few candidates who submitted essays which gave the appearance of being prepared to different subjects. These were essays of real quality but, again, not addressing issues in the way required by the subject. There may be overlap between what the candidate is studying in Geography, Philosophy or Religious Studies for example and the title which can be submitted for Global Perspectives. It is however very unlikely that the structure of the questions submitted will be equally applicable for both subjects. There is nothing to stop candidates building on knowledge that they have gained elsewhere for this essay but the essay itself needs to be planned for the assessment criteria in *this* syllabus.

Easily the weakest section most essays was the recognition of limitations and the need for further research. Some candidates add on a comment along the lines of "if I had more time I would research this further". Many ignored this section completely. Its purpose is with the candidates to be able to demonstrate their awareness of the limitations of their own knowledge and understanding of the global issue they are dealing with. The nature of the further research is bound to vary hugely according to the nature of the subject. There are some questions, such as those dealing with environmental issues, where the future is unclear and some, notably ethical, questions where much of the discussion is unlikely to be changed by future discovery. There are also some questions where research into one of the global perspectives under discussion is much more difficult than the other. The best responses to this criterion should show awareness of limitations in their evaluation of the exemplar sources and also in caveats to their conclusions. An awareness of the need for further research was also often a feature of balanced, nuanced conclusions.

The following extract from a strong essay has several characteristics which may be helpful for teachers and candidates. The title was "What theoretical model of conservation is most effective?"

Despite the unifying presence of UNEP, many governments recurrently fail to commit. This was voiced by Guardian journalist Monbiot¹, in context of the Nagoya² summit where governments were 'invited' to set targets, framing any specific targets in square brackets, hence contesting their adoption. Del Mar believes the 'traditional' goals of economic prosperity in Western nations disrupt the political will to conserve. A stinging critique of Western countries was delivered by Dasgupta⁴, writing for The Times of India, who compared UN objectives with what they achieved - 'the sharp decline in economic activity in (Soviet) economies... resulted in a corresponding reduction in (agreeing countries)... emissions', implying that targets met were attributable to chance, yet were 'trumpeted' as successes. The US, which alone emits 7% of global emissions, rejected the Kyoto protocol, yet it has often pressed India to sign up to limits. India, however, traditionally perceived as 'obstinate' (Yardley⁶), is not concerned with '(saving) the planet' but rather with '(accommodating) the rights and aspirations of millions of Indians' (M. Singh, TIME), for whom industrialization will bring increased standard of living

Throughout, this essay was extremely well supported by cited and referenced sources. Although not a formal requirement this candidate did use footnotes to add to the essay. It should be noted that this is a tactic which can be effective as it was in this case. However, the Examiners are very alert to the word limit. The word limit of this essay was given at just over 1,900 words and this was checked. The comments in the footnotes were therefore noted. Had they taken the total to over 2000 words, they would have been ignored. A second feature of this extract is the way the candidate handles the global nature of the discussion. An Indian perspective is put by an Indian. Throughout, the essay not only dealt with global issues but gave them fully global treatment, obtaining a Level 4 for this criterion. This is a characteristic of the strongest essays. More modest responses regularly address different perspectives but the non-Western one is voiced by a Western commentator. It can also be seen in this extract that the candidate used a number of exemplar sources, quoting and briefly evaluating each. This is just as acceptable as an in-depth evaluation of as few as two exemplars. What matters is that the exemplar sources genuinely exemplify the perspectives and do not merely commentate on them.

¹ Monbiot has 28 years of experience in environmental journalism and has filmed the documentary Amazon Watershed, about the illegal logging practices in the Amazon that affected the local tribespeople's livelihoods. He now writes exclusively for the environment section of the Guardian newspaper.

² Only a third of countries even sent a minister to Nagoya. Only two heads of state were present

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 8987/03
Presentation

Key Messages

- Stronger presentations make use of the resource booklet to frame a clearly global debate
- Successful presentations carefully locate sources using arguments and perspectives
- Communication is rewarded for clarity and coherence of argument
- Effective question setting remains important.

General Comments

It was very pleasing to see a continuing trend this session of candidates responding to the guidance in previous Principal Examiner's reports and crafting presentations which responded to the requirements of the mark scheme and the spirit of the qualification. This produced work of the very highest quality in a number of candidates but also meant that the work submitted was able to respond effectively to the sources and debates in the resource booklet across the ability range.

At the same time, a number of candidates from a smaller number of Centres would benefit from a reading of this and previous reports as well as the study of the exemplar scripts which are available on the Teacher Support website. For this reason, there is also some specific guidance here for how these presentations might have more closely and effectively matched the requirements of this component.

Responding to the resource booklet

In the main, candidates are rewarded for their ability to construct effective, evidence-based arguments which engage genuinely with alternative perspectives and use that engagement to come to well-grounded conclusions. However, the sources and debates within the resource booklet are there to support candidates, and can facilitate effective responses across the range of achievement if they are used in this way. The documents for this session were concerned with the conflict between freedom of information and the need for security and privacy, with a particular focus on the Internet. In this way, there were some clear debates on topics which were familiar and engaging to candidates, and nearly all of the work submitted did engage in debate rather than conveying information only (which is not rewarded). The very strongest work used this effectively to focus a debate that was explicitly global:

Recent events such as the 'whistle-blowing' of Edward Snowden, the leaking of confidential government documents by Wikileaks and the censorship of media in countries such as China and Egypt have significantly brought freedom of expression and the 'right to know' centre stage in discussions about the value of liberty across the globe. However, this worldwide debate can be further expanded; is there a limit to our freedom and, if so, where is it?

This type of focus even supported weaker work, such as this presentation which still began with the global nature of the Internet and the debate around the WikiLeaks controversy 'which has released secret information from many a country. All these secrets would never have reached the public's knowledge if it was not for the Internet. Which begs the question, should governments regulate the Internet?'

Some candidates engaged explicitly with the resource booklet at the outset but did this by identifying a less central aspect. One candidate, for example was led to 'the sustainability of the Chinese communist party' on the basis of Document 4's discussion of Internet censorship in China and the simultaneous establishment of the country as 'a major international player'. If argued in this way, presentation can establish at least some

global significance and a basis in the source materials. However, others limited themselves by, for example, only on the US legislative framework for freedom of speech and national security.

Arguments and perspectives

The Principal Examiner's report for the June 2013 session set out the distinction between arguments and perspectives in this way: 'an argument is a line of reasoning leading to a specific conclusion, either made by the candidate or located by them in a specific source. A perspective is a coherent world view which responds to an issue, made up of argument, evidence and assumptions which may come from a particular context.' Many candidates now have a clear understanding of this which is assisting them in creating effective presentations which engage with different perspectives. One candidate did this with his question 'Should America act as a global police force?' (in response to Document 7). By keeping a firm distinction between sources and perspectives he was able to identify both Arab political and US economic perspectives against intervention (each supported by different sources) but also to contrast a number of sources which have an ideologically interventionist perspective. Constructing their presentation in this way allowed the candidate to identify more than one 'point of synthesis' between sources in constructing each perspective and then to combine all in this part of their strong final judgement:

Max Boot's sound and well-supported argument, supported by Clark and The Heritage Foundation, for the necessity of America, as an economically, ideologically and military strong power, to act as a global police force in the absence of an effective alternative body, remains ostensibly unchallenged by the opposing perspective, which, whilst recognising the necessity of establishing a peace-keeping force, does not offer reasonable alternatives.

Not only are arguments and perspectives firmly differentiated, but this is used as the basis for the sustained synthesis of a range of sources. In this way, the candidate is meeting more than one criterion for high level achievement. Other candidates, however, persisted in referring to individual arguments as 'perspectives' which inhibited their ability to combine individual sources into larger perspectives and respond to them.

Evaluating the credibility of sources

Given the assessment objectives for this syllabus, it is clear that some evaluation – of whatever sort – will be rewarded more than no evaluation at all. However, the quality and relevance of evaluation also matters, and is worth considering especially for candidates who wish to move from the middle to upper levels of the range of assessment. Consider, for example, the way in which these two candidates contextualise a source:

- (a) Robert Cryer is a professor of international and criminal law at Birmingham Law School. He holds a doctorate in his field of study and has released several publications about international law already. He has no readily clear bias or vested interest and can then be considered a reliable source.
- (b) Kenan Malik, a renowned British political campaigner for free speech, is of the perspective that hate speech, online and elsewhere, should not be banned.

Although more concise, candidate (b) has situated Malik relevantly in terms of the perspective to which he subscribes. There is also an implied understanding of the ideological bias this brings which will be developed in evaluating his argument. Candidate (a) on the other hand has recorded more detail about the provenance of their source but does not focus this in terms of its perspective. They also assume that education and academic expertise automatically demonstrate neutrality, rather than considering how even reliable evidence might well be being presented to reinforce a particular set of assumptions.

Communication

An important aspect for candidates to consider is an appropriate response to AO4 – Communication – in their presentations. This has a significant weighting for this component, but is assessed through the candidate's ability to communicate argument effectively, rather than the generic usage of a range of presentational devices. In other words, the audience should be engaged by the coherence of the presentation's structure and the precision of the evidential support it offers. This is best achieved through detailed, scripted argument which fully exploits the 15 minutes of delivery time which is permitted. There is no requirement for this to be delivered live – PowerPoint presentations with audio tracks, or electronic posters with a recorded commentary are equally acceptable, along with a number of other formats, and many candidates may be better assisted by being allowed to construct their presentations in this way. Having said that, there were a great many excellent live presentations this session which delivered a

carefully prepared argumentative script with the support of visual aids. It was their communication of the argument which was assessed though, not the visual aids or any other presentational devices in the presentation. This was significant for a number of candidates from some Centres who chose to utilise audience interaction, to play extended video clips or even use other candidates to act out dramatic scenes. Interesting and entertaining as these additions were, they did not add elements which could be rewarded under the marking scheme and took time away from the communication of argument and evidence.

On the topic of time, it should also be observed that the most effective presentations worked efficiently to present their strongest, most detailed and coherent arguments just within the 15 minute maximum time. A number of other candidates, however, gave presentations which were substantially shorter than this, and in some cases significantly under 10 minutes. Considering the requirements which are tested for this component and its weighting of 45% of the Global Perspectives qualification, it is expected that candidates undertake enough research and develop sufficient argument to fill the allowed 15 minutes in order to be able to access the middle and upper ranges of achievement.

Comments on Specific Questions

The positive trends noted in previous reports have continued in question setting. Most candidates and Centres now appear to recognise that a key feature of both Papers 2 and 3 is that candidates must formulate their own question as part of the process of learning and teachers need to support them in creating effective questions and giving them feedback on their efforts. Some questions tended to be presented as statements – ‘Revolution, Jihadi Terrorism and the Role of the Internet’, for example – or as questions which just called for descriptive explanation: ‘What are the Global Perspectives regarding the Wikileaks issue?’ Neither of these strategies helps to focus a debate leading to an evaluative judgement. Occasionally, questions were correctly focused yet created a debate lacking in genuine alternatives: ‘Can a revolution be effective without social media?’, for instance, is problematic insofar as there have been a number of revolutions in history which were very effective without social media. Focused, direct but open debates, such as ‘Should our governments censor material on the Internet?’ or ‘Should online hate speech be banned?’ were much more effective.