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FOREWORD

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

THINKING SKILLS

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8436/01
Multiple Choice

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

| Paper 8436/02 |
| Paper 2 |

General comments

The paper appeared to have the same level of difficulty as last November's paper. Most candidates were able to complete answers to all three questions, a few performed extremely well, and there was a wide range of scores.

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

All questions appeared to discriminate well between candidates, in that for each question the range of marks awarded was wide. There was no question for which marks were consistently low, but marks for **Question 3** were probably, in general, slightly lower than those for **Questions 1** and **2**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This is the question where candidates are most likely to write at unnecessary length, for example by telling the story over again before getting down to the business of evaluating the evidence. This means that they are writing maybe a page or two for which no marks can be given, and that they are wasting valuable time that could be spent on other questions. Also some candidates give a brief introduction listing the various sources of evidence that they will discuss, and saying what the task is. This is fine if it helps the candidate to think more clearly, but it is not necessary as part of the evaluation. A good way to introduce the topic, used by a few good candidates, is to state one's conclusion, e.g. 'Based on the evidence given, it is not very likely that Tariq deliberately started the fire'. One can then go on to support this conclusion by evaluating the various pieces of evidence.

Most candidates came to a reasonable conclusion that there was insufficient evidence to establish Tariq's guilt. The various pieces of evidence were generally well covered, though some omitted to mention the Chief Fireman, the Headmaster and/or the CCTV. Evaluation of reliability and vested interests of witnesses was generally good, and almost everyone recognised that Ashok's evidence could not be relied on. Some erroneously inferred from the Chief Fireman's comments that the fire *must* have been started deliberately. Better candidates pointed out that, given Mrs Wong's evidence and the unreliability of the caretaker, it was just as likely that the fire started accidentally from a discarded cigarette end as that Tariq started it deliberately. Some who came to the correct conclusion did so by placing undue weight on the evidence of Kareena and her mother, without observing that Kareena has an interest in supporting Tariq, or that her mother's evidence could not establish the time that Tariq left their house. Some weaker answers identified Ashok as the culprit, telling a story about a plot by him and his friends, sometimes including the caretaker, to discredit Tariq. In doing so they went far beyond the evidence given. Such speculation and inventiveness in answers gains no marks.

Question 2

(a) This part of the question was answered well by the vast majority of candidates. Errors we[re] in offering comments from the final paragraph that relate to the possible positive effects of b[an] advertising.

(b) Possible answers here are that children are the easiest to manipulate; that they do not grow out of unhealthy eating habits acquired during childhood; and that parents cannot refuse to grant their children's demands for unhealthy foods. Fewer scored full marks on this question than on **(a)**. Those who did generally offered the first and third points. A large number recognised the first point only. Some simply repeated statements from the passage, even though the question clearly asks for unstated assumptions.

(c) The majority of candidates suggested an appropriate example, a common one being the use of taxes to solve problems caused by smoking. Some candidates seemed confused as to whether they were justifying acting or not acting on the principle, but if they gave a good reason, they were given credit.

(d) Most candidates identified the contradiction. Some correctly cited 'people are not so easily influenced by what is said on television', but offered 'adults…cannot be relied on to make the right choices' instead of 'adults…are almost as susceptible as children to messages that appear on television'. Such candidates gained only one mark.

(e) Very few candidates understood the full implications of this statement, i.e. that, provided we can assume a causal connection between the health messages on smoking and the reduction in the numbers who smoke, then it may be worthwhile trying a similar health awareness campaign with regard to unhealthy foods, instead of taking the drastic step of banning the production and sale of such foods. Many saw that it did weaken the argument, but could not fully explain why. Some thought that it neither strengthened nor weakened the argument because it seemed to weaken the claim in paragraph three that people ignore messages on television, and strengthen the claim in paragraph five that people are susceptible to such messages. Some credit was given for such answers.

(f)(i) What was needed here was 'otherwise manufacturers would not spend so much money on it', together with an evaluation of this as support for the claim that advertising works. A good answer would be that it is reasonable to think that manufacturers would not spend on advertising if it had no impact on sales, but that this does not amount to direct evidence. A few managed to make all three points, a large number identified the reason without evaluating it fully, and some simply repeated the claims about children's unhealthy eating.

(ii) This question worked well in distinguishing between those who could specify *how*, in relation to this topic, statistics and surveys could provide good evidence, and those who could only say *that* statistics and surveys could provide evidence. Candidates needed to say, for example, that comparisons could be made between sales figures for a product before and after advertising, and between sales figures for similar products, only one of which has been advertised. In relation to surveys, it was not enough to say that people could be asked which adverts they had seen. Credit was given if they said that people could be asked why they had bought certain products.

Question 3

Answers to this question show wide variation among Centres, with most candidates from ma[n]y demonstrating a clear understanding of how to analyse and evaluate an argument, and candidates fro[m] Centres simply discussing the topic which is raised in the stimulus passage without getting to grips w[ith] argument presented. However, few score very high marks on this question, perhaps because the argume[nts] are complex, and the possible criticisms are many.

The main conclusion is that *speed cameras should be dismantled and thrown away*. Each of paragraphs 2 to 6 has reasons and at least one intermediate conclusion. These intermediate conclusions are:

- cameras are installed for the wrong reason

- the idea that cameras make roads safer depends on two false assumptions

- the cameras have two serious consequences

- ensuring road safety is too complex a matter to be achieved by speed cameras

- obviously we do not need speed cameras.

The vast majority recognised that the passage was arguing against the use of speed cameras, but some thought that the main conclusion was that we do not need speed cameras. Candidates need to be aware that even if the last sentence of the passage is clearly a conclusion of some kind, it may not be the main conclusion. The sort of reasons needed to support the last sentence would simply be statements establishing (or purporting to establish) that something else could do the job that speed cameras are supposed to do (i.e. make roads safer). The first three intermediate conclusions are clearly not addressing this issue, but are giving more general reasons for getting rid of cameras. To gain the highest mark for analysis (which few did), candidates needed to correctly identify the main and some of the intermediate conclusions, together with the supporting reasons. Marks are given at a lower level for identifying the main conclusion and most of the main strands of reasoning, even if intermediate conclusions are not specifically mentioned, and at a lower level for recognising the general direction of the argument, even if the main conclusion is not correctly identified. Little credit can be given for simply repeating or summarising the passage.

It was easier to identify problems with the argument, rather than strengths, but some were able to point out that it was correct in claiming that factors other than speed can contribute to accidents, that better driver education would be useful, and that speed cameras alone cannot ensure road safety.

Good answers made a range of criticisms, for example:

- the cameras may have been installed in order to make roads safer

- the increase in road deaths may be due to other factors

- if people drove more slowly on poor roads, it is likely that fewer crashes and fewer deaths would occur

- those who stick to speed limits when close to a camera may do so in other places

- the fact that road safety is a complex matter is a reason for doing more than installing speed cameras, but not for getting rid of them.

Most candidates were able to offer some of these criticisms. There was less reliance on vague and general comments than in the November 2004 paper (i.e. comments such as 'there are not enough statistics', 'this is a lop-sided argument'). However, some candidates discussed the style of the passage in more detail than was relevant in order to criticise the reasoning. There were very few uses of language that needed discussion – perhaps only the reference to 'poor drivers', since those who exceed speed limits could be said to be poor drivers.

Many candidates did not offer a section on 'further argument', so lost a possible four marks. Some good further arguments were supplied, suggesting the use of more cameras, given that they make drivers slow down, or hiding cameras, so that drivers may observe speed limits all the time. General comments about how to make roads safer did not gain marks, because they did not relate directly to the conclusion about getting rid of speed cameras. For further argument, some candidates invented statistics, saying for example that some highly ranked researcher from a specific university had published statistics about road safety or the effects of speed cameras. Although this shows that the candidate knows that expertise is important in relation to evidence, this is not what Examiners are looking for as further argument, and often these candidates were uncritical as to whether their own invented statistics showed a causal relationship, even though they had criticised the passage for assuming that the 2% increase in road deaths was caused by speed cameras.