

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Paper 9766/04
Independent Research Report

Key messages

- Make sure that critical thinking techniques in the broadest sense are used to assess evidence
- Ensure that reflection on the research process is always undertaken as part of the journey along the Critical Path.

General comments

Reports which showed an awareness that the IRR was a chance to use and develop the critical skills developed in GP were the most successful. The element of evaluation and judgement was not always sufficiently developed and the marking did always not make sufficient distinction between the use of evidence, the analysis of different sources and the key skill of assessing the evidence in relation to a sustained discussion of different perspectives. While some reports provided good explanations of issues within the chosen subject they did not meet the requirements of the mark scheme enough to justify the marks awarded.

AO1 In general, the marks awarded were fairly consistent with the analysis of the research process by centre markers. The IRR monitoring form was generally completed in a careful way and the qualities recorded were generally translated accurately into marks.

AO2 This deals with the analysis and assessment of research materials. There was not always sufficient attention paid to the requirement that 'critical thinking techniques' should be used to evaluate evidence. In some cases the use of a literature review meant that there was a lot of description of evidence but the analysis of it was too limited to be worth the higher marks often awarded. **AO2** is intended to assess how the critical approach developed in the first three papers of Global Perspectives (GP) is applied to personal research and to a wider range of evidence. The explanation of the evidence and the use of sources in argument without any critical evaluation should not be over rewarded. Neither should evaluation which relies on comments about the origin of the evidence, especially when using academic studies. There was some tendency for basic ad hominem comment to be over used as a means of assessing evidence.

AO3 In some cases there was very little attempt to reflect on personal research in a meaningful way so the impression was of a project rather than a contextualised demonstration of higher level thinking skills, which needed developed reflection on methodology and evidence as part of the Critical Path process that underpins the whole qualification.

AO4 Communication was often strong in itself, with an impressive mastery of some technical vocabulary and some well-focused writing that had obviously been carefully reviewed by the learners. However marking should consider how well the candidates' 'own argument' had been communicated.

AO5 Intellectual challenge. This is something that does need to be considered at the initial planning stage. Reports do not have to be mini PhD thesis or involve very complex specialist material. However, if the subject is relatively straightforward, the evidence undemanding and the approach limited to explaining different views, then the opportunities for demonstrating a response to intellectual challenge may be too limited. However, importing complex philosophical views into straightforward subject matter is not the way forward here. If Utilitarianism or Marxism interests a learner then these ideas could be the subject of a report. However to introduce them into a topic for which they have limited reference is unhelpful. There may be a Utilitarian view of drug use in athletics but long excursions into moral philosophy may be strained and out of place.

It was clear that some learners would have benefited from submitting an Outline Proposal Form (OPF) so that they could have responded to feedback on whether their questions offered the chance to look at different perspectives and also whether their proposed approach and the sources they had chosen seemed appropriate to the topic. In some cases it was clear that there was a mismatch between the actual question and the analysis offered or that the question offered limited chances for sustained discussion, something that was apparent from the start. These issues could have been addressed through the submission of an OPF.

There were some very well focused answers which received appropriate credit for sustained analysis and evaluation and were evidence driven. However, there were some descriptive responses which did not engage with the assessment of evidence or different perspectives and which were over credited by centres. There were also answers which showed a great deal of hard work and personal research but were not showing the skills needed.

Whatever the outcome, the process of extended research is one of the most valuable preparations for future study. One element that was apparent from the work seen which is common to previous series is the obvious engagement of many learners with their chosen topic and the high level of commitment to producing mature and well informed writing. If that can be combined with the progress along the Critical Path then a variety of very worthwhile education objectives can be met.