

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 9777/01

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.
- The key skill, particularly on the later questions, needed to score high marks is that of evaluation, supported by precise reference to the passage.
- **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 illustrate a point and 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.
- 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 encouraging. Candidates were able to access the passages and most showed a clear understanding of the demands of the questions. There were a number who did not pay attention to either the marks available or the command words in the questions and this limited the level achieved. It is encouraging to see that an increased number of candidates are able to apply the higher level skills on the final question, although there is 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 well over a side for **Questions 1a (i) and (ii)**, whereas a few lines would have been sufficient. As a result, some answers to the final question were too brief and ideas were not fully developed. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents demonstrating that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being considered.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) (i)** Candidates who read the question carefully were usually able to score well, but there were a number who ignored the phrase 'against the work of the IPCC' and wrote more generally about Bays' views and therefore produced answers that were only occasionally specifically focused. The question carried only four marks and did not require lengthy answers, but clear identification of the main points Bays puts forward. However, the question did require candidates to summarise Bays' arguments and therefore simply copying out large amounts of texts was not credited, although short quotations to support a point were acceptable. Candidates scored either one mark for an undeveloped and valid point or two for a relevant and developed point. Most candidates were able to note that the IPCC cannot be trusted because of government intervention or political interference, but a number did not develop this fully and therefore did not score the maximum number of marks. An example of a full mark response can be seen below:

'Document 1 accuses the IPCC of not fulfilling its expectations as an 'objective scientific body'. The main reason given for this is the fact that the government, who are claimed to have a vested interest in the conclusions of the IPCC as a way to increase their power, have 'input' into the

process of the IPCC's conclusions, meaning it is unlikely to be objective. It is furthermore claimed the IPCC are not 'scientific' as the conclusions it produces are made without consulting scientists. It also calls some of the IPCC's claims 'controversial' and in summary, accuses them of 'fraud' and even 'corruption'.

(ii) Most candidates were able to identify two pieces of evidence to support Bays' arguments about the work of the IPCC. However, candidates who did not read **Question 1 a(i)** carefully and wrote about his arguments in general drifted into comments about the temperature of the earth. A significant number also used the Nobel Peace Prize of the Kyoto Agreement, and although they are pieces of evidence they did not support his arguments about the work of the IPCC. Candidates who scored well referred either to specific statements that were added or deleted from the reports or simply mentioned the revision to Chapter 8 or the 2007 Fourth Assessment Report. As with **Question 1 a(i)** examiners did not expect lengthy answers and two simple relevant bullet points sufficed to score the two marks.

(b) This question allowed candidates to discuss both the evidence and the reasoning within Document 1. Although candidates found it easier to discuss the weaknesses, there were very few who were not able to at least suggest that there might be some strength to the article and therefore offer some balance. The stronger responses often discussed each point and then made a judgement as to the strength or weakness of the issue under discussion, before making an overall judgement about the document. However, other approaches were acceptable. Most candidates discussed both the evidence used by Bays and his reasoning. The weaker responses often made valid points, but they were little more than claims as they were not supported by precise textual knowledge which would have supported the point being made, and were therefore not credited as evaluation. Candidates should avoid lengthy description or summaries of the document under consideration as this will confine their answer to the lowest mark band, but should focus on the key skill for this paper, evaluation. In doing this, it is important to ensure that they link their discussions back to the question and that they leave the examiner in no doubt as to whether it is a strength or weakness that they are discussing, rather than leaving it implied.

Most were able to suggest that many of Bays' claims were just assertions and not supported by precise factual material; this was just as true for his claims about the deliberate fraud and the melting of the ice caps as seen in the example below:

'Other assertions made do not feature sufficient or any evidence. For example, the statement 'historically, governments have used global warming to expand their control' is very unconvincing as it is vague, generalising and contains no examples.'

Many went on to note that even if the work of the IPCC has been undermined it did not mean that global warming was not happening. A significant number also commented on his expertise in the field and argued that this significantly weakened his argument, particularly as he did not use any experts to support his claim. The example below shows how this could be incorporated into a balanced discussion:

'While some may argue that it is a weakness that the document was only authored by a university candidate and not a professional, it cannot be denied that the author has no obvious financial gain or other vested interest from his conclusions, and therefore they are more likely to be objective and reliable.'

Although some may dispute this claim, given the author's lack of expertise, the response is balanced and offers a valid evaluation of the provenance.

Candidates also considered the validity of the evidence that was used as shown below:

'Another weakness, however, is in its failure to sufficiently evaluate its sources. It describes how 'oil, coal and utility companies' disputed the IPCC, without considering that this would have been in their financial interests, as their products are what is accused of contributing to global warming. Nevertheless, other sources cited are more reliable, such as objective facts about the 'Nobel Peace Prize.'

Some candidates suggested that a strength was a counter argument, but it is difficult to see that reference to the Nobel Prize or the UN is sufficiently strong to make a case for this and those who

suggested that the lack of a counter argument weakened the Document appeared to be on firmer ground.

Question 2

Candidates continue to find this the most demanding question. However, it brings together the skills that have been tested on earlier questions, which are frequently ignored when tackling this question. Despite this, it was pleasing to see that a significant number of candidates did at least attempt to evaluate the two documents and did not simply summarise the content in a comparative way. 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, rather than see the documents in a vacuum. 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.

Candidates who did evaluate the two documents usually considered the issue of provenance and most argued that Revkin's background made his views stronger than those of Bays, although some suggested that as Revkin was writing for a national newspaper, whereas Bays was writing for a degree it could be argued that Bays was less likely to be susceptible to outside influences. Candidates also considered the question of evidence and this allowed many the opportunity to produce balanced answers as although they suggested Revkin appeared to support his argument with reference to scientists this was often vague as he referred to 'many scientists' or 'experts' without actually naming them. However, stronger answers often developed this further and noted that he did refer to both John Wallace and Dr. Eicken, which appeared to give his argument greater credibility. Similarly, some candidates noted that Document 2 used specific statistical support to add to its credibility:

'for example when in the first paragraph it states that there have been changes for the last 420,000 years, instead of vaguely referring to the past, and also when it uses specific examples of the 2007 report.'

Stronger answers also considered the sources used to support the arguments put forward in the two documents. This also provided an opportunity for balanced discussion as seen in the example below which considers the evidence used in Document 1:

'It describes how 'oil, coal and utility companies disputed the IPCC, without considering that this would have been in their financial interests, as their products are what it is accused of contributing to global warming. Nevertheless, other sources cited are more reliable, such as objective facts about the Nobel Peace Prize.'

Some answers also considered both the relevance of the arguments in each document and the delivery of the argument. There were a number of responses who noted that Document 1 scarcely addressed the issue of global warming and instead focused on the issue of the credibility and corruption of the IPCC. One candidate noted that 'It could be criticised that Document 1 contains an ad hominem attack, which is flawed in its relevance to global warming because although it attacks the IPCC organisation and their methods, it fails to consider in any other way the correctness of their conclusions about global warming.' Similarly candidates discussed the method of delivery of the argument, noting that Document 2, despite its assertions was able to keep its conclusions in the third person, 'many scientists said' and 'experts say'. However, some suggested that the structure of document 1, with the opening rhetorical questions made it more convincing.

The strongest arguments reached a supported judgement about which document was more convincing and sometimes there were even interim judgements after a point had been discussed, which resulted in an overall judgement based on these interim judgements. Candidates should be encouraged to reach an overall judgement, but it does need to be based on the argument that has been pursued throughout the response and must be more than assertion. An example of a strong conclusion which reaches a balanced judgement is shown below:

'In conclusion, although in a sense Document 2 is less convincing as it fails to produce as many examples of specific statistics as Document 1, or to as accurately source its evidence, its arguments are presented much more objectively making them more convincing, and in addition, are much more relevant to the question of global warming, as they address it and its evidence specifically rather than concentrating on an attack against a specific opponent. In this way, Document 2 is indeed generally more convincing, although it is not without its flaws as well.'

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 9777/02

Essay

Key Messages

- The most successful candidates deal fairly with two contrasting global perspectives. Candidates should be reminded that balance is even more important if you strongly support one of the views presented.
- Successful candidates realise that it is possible to have an interest in something without having a vested interest, and to have an opinion without being biased.
- Sources must be evaluated against the perspectives used and the wider context.
- Research remains the most common weak point in essays with many essays displaying an over-reliance on a narrow range of material. Essays should contain evidence of wide research having taken place.
- Remember this is not an unseen paper. It is not enough to comment that a source lacks support: candidates should research and be able to comment from their findings on the quality of the source.
- Titles must always be in the form of a question and teachers are reminded that questions can be sent to Cambridge for comment prior to the session in which candidates are submitting work as stated in the syllabus.
- The syllabus has not changed and teachers are reminded that reports exist for previous sessions and that these remain useful documents with which to be familiar.

General Comments

It was pleasing to see some very strong responses this session. There are many candidates who really engage with the fundamental aim of this paper, which is to help the candidate develop a better understanding of the differing global perspectives on important issues. The best responses were serious-minded, well-researched and empathetic. It was clear from reflection that this exercise had broadened some candidates' understanding of the context of their own view of the world. In doing so they had sometimes changed their views, and always enriched them.

The best responses truly engaged with the debate. The candidate might have very strong views, but achieved balance. While many candidates achieved this, there was a sizable minority who could only see the merits of one side of a debate, and whose references to the other or others were characterised by hostility, denial of their validity, or ridicule. This tendency was most marked in essays dealing with religious/ethical differences, or on topics such as terrorism.

Some candidates made it very difficult, or impossible, to score highly owing to the nature of the question they set. The first task is to identify an appropriate question. It remains an unfortunate fact that some candidates do not do this, and set themselves summative tasks, or set out to defend one point of view only. These responses cannot do well because the Assessment Objectives state that different perspectives need to be critically compared. Without choosing different perspectives to compare and contrast candidates are limiting their achievement at the outset.

Many candidates spend too much time evaluating the sources and not enough evaluating the perspectives. It must be stressed that effective evaluation cannot be achieved through using a rehearsed approach. While the vocabulary associated with Critical Thinking can be helpful, the candidate needs to move past the content and onto the context. One candidate wrote:

'Another weakness in Lichter's argument is her use of unsupported statistics stating that the Pakistani literacy rate for females is less than 2 percent and that 3 million girls now go to school compared to ten years ago. These would be supporting information but are not cited from any specific source.'

In this particular case the evaluation of the source would be most effectively done by checking the figures. Another candidate wrote:

'It may also be likely she has a vested interest in 'designer babies' due to the fact the some people who are part of the society may practice in the medical field of 'designer babies' and she may be inclined to withhold evidence about 'designer babies' that is not entirely positive and could have a negative effect for them and may tarnish their reputation'

Comments like this are not evaluation, but speculation. In an essay where there are marks for suggesting (and doing) research these are not appropriate.

Candidates need to remember the word limit. Many excellent essays were 1800-1950 words long. A few went over the limit, and the excess was not marked. As the excess often included reflection and conclusion, this lowered the mark that could be awarded. Some tried to gain themselves extra space in other ways. Examples included:

- A text 2000 words with full footnotes containing extra explanation. This could not be credited as it went over the limit – and it contained much of the candidate's source evaluation.
- Extensive quotation integral to the text, but not counted in the candidate's word count.
- 2000 word text and additional diagrams and illustrations to develop points. In these cases the text not the images was counted.

Comments on Specific Questions: examples of effective and less effective practice from this session

Effective questions:

To elicit an effective answer you need to ask an effective question. Examples of effective questions used this session are given below. From each of these candidates were able to access global issues, identify clearly differing perspectives and provide a reflective response to the steer of the question:

Should scientists be obliged to publish negative data?

Is torture ever justified?

Should children be allowed to engage in paid work?

Is the UN fit for purpose?

Should the present ban on international ivory trade be lifted?

Is Nuclear Power a viable alternative to Fossil Fuels?

Less effective questions:

Should Euthanasia be legalised in the UK? This is specific to one country and the candidate is making it more difficult to critically compare genuinely different perspectives.

To what extent is China a "superpower" and evaluate how sustainable are China's policies if they are to maintain their status of been a superpower? This uses two different command words and is over-complex

Should Drugs in Sport be legalised and what will the impacts in the world of sport be? This is too broad and is further limited by requiring a factual summative response to the second command. Questions of this type do not encourage the identification of different perspectives.

Effective phrasing:

Many candidates fail to recognise the authenticity and validity of a particular view (especially one with which they disagree). The following is an example of effective phrasing:

'In any case, the DMU (Durham Miners') obituary can be seen as a reliable representation of the miners' perspective. To legitimize celebrating Thatcher's death, even for those who were directly affected by her, we must consider two factors: whether her actions are relevant enough today to warrant a celebration of her particular death, and whether a celebration of death is ever justifiable. To address the first: the strong reactions all over the world to her death in April testify for themselves that her legacy is still important. The Economist, a widely circulated magazine which has "backed Margaret Thatcher", claims "Margaret Thatcher and the -ism that she coined remain as relevant today as they were in the 1980s." This would justify the relevance, if not the correctness, of celebrating her death.'

This candidate concluded by arguing that celebration of Margaret Thatcher's death was not justified; nevertheless recognising the Durham miners' view as a legitimate perspective worthy of consideration. The extract is an example of the concise and orderly development of an argument – made clearly global in the essay overall – an approach which would lead the candidate to the top level of attainment, seeing and appreciating both perspectives, and reflecting on them to a supported conclusion.

Effective Reflection:

Having explained the differing perspectives on an issue, and shown awareness, candidates need to move on to reflect on the debate, and here their own views can be developed as they move towards a supported conclusion. These are two very different examples of effective reflection:

'Yes, there are many more immigrants in the area, but there is no real evidence that they are doing any damage. The real problem here seems to be more of a fear of the unknown, which is then fed by anecdotal stories of them being 'up to no good' which, can only be fuelled by the Daily Mail's use of such emotive language.'

'If all crops produced become genetically modified, an idea that is not so abstract considering that current estimates reveal that 75% of all processed food in America contains GM produce, then eventually the majority of the world's food supply will be controlled by multi-billion dollar corporations – a notion that is unsettling at best.'

Both of these examples begin to illustrate the potentially transformative influence that studying Global perspectives can have on a person's thinking.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 9777/03
Presentation

Key Messages

Presentations should primarily focus on contrasting different perspectives

Clear concepts help to create more effective presentations

A good understanding of the difference between an issue, an argument and a perspective should be demonstrated within presentations

Effective questions are an important part of effective presentations

General Comments

Each session, this paper gives candidates a pre-released booklet of source materials for them to use as starting points in constructing their presentations. However, the key educational objectives which are assessed – the development of supported arguments which respond to alternative perspectives and reach their own considered judgements – remain the same. Centres are therefore advised to study closely previous Principal Examiner reports, especially those for June and November 2012. Taken together with this one, these are now beginning to build a library of examples of good practice which teachers and candidates may well find helpful.

Building broader arguments

A significant number of candidates responded to the tiger mother debate in the source materials, focusing particularly on Amy Chua's arguments in Document 1 and Hannah Rosin's response in Document 2. More effective responses avoided a purely personal consideration of their preferred parenting style and did not rely on the uncritical use of found material on styles of parenting (often the same material on the same four styles). Instead, they identified distinctive underlying issues of their own and conceptualised them, placing the presentation within a wider context. For example, one candidate used these documents as their starting point in asking 'should education place more emphasis on discipline than creativity?' They demonstrated this link between the stimulus documents and their chosen concepts early on: 'The Chinese mother, Amy Chua (Document 1) quoted focus on discipline, whereas the American mother focuses on creativity'. The ideas of discipline and creativity then established a broader framework for debate which allowed them to evaluate their research and reach a synthesised conclusion.

Another successful method for putting the parenting debate within a wider context was to use some of the arguments in Document 3 which linked parenting to economic success on a national level. This allowed for questions such as, 'Do countries with societies that encourage individualism have more prosperous economies?' This type of question identifies the relevant concepts and allows for a sharp and more sophisticated consideration of evidence.

In general, candidates who took a more flexible approach, using skills from the critical path, and who began with perspectives supported by combinations of documents instead of a number of documents treated separately were much more successful in their presentations.

Structuring perspectives, arguments and sources

Successful presentations responded to the emphasis of the mark scheme on focused issues, well-structured reasoning and sympathetic reflection on perspectives by being explicitly aware of these terms and using them to signpost the structure of their work for their audience. To reiterate, an issue is a topic (e.g. parenting) or a concept (e.g. gender differentiation). 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.

This understanding was demonstrated early on by a presentation which asked ‘does the entertainment industry objectify women?’: ‘first I will contextualise the question by defining terms necessary for its understanding, then I will present three perspectives on the issue, and finally I will go into my own perspective.’ Here they demonstrated their focus on their own question and an understanding of the distinction between other perspectives (each of which in turn contained several arguments and sources) and their own. Another candidate, responding to the question ‘do women have a disadvantage in comedic media compared to men?’, demonstrated this understanding towards the end of their presentation as follows:

So, those are the two perspectives, each with two sources that hold as many strengths as they do weaknesses. In the end, which side of the argument is right? After analysing each side’s argument and thinking about my personal views on the subject, I ultimately do not think that women are less funny.

This conclusion requires more development and justification (which the candidate goes on to provide), but it starts here with a clear sense of the perspectives, arguments and sources they have explored as distinct strands, and an awareness that the judgement to be made will require filtering these through their own context and assumptions.

Evaluating sources and evidence

The assessment of this paper looks for judgements which are supported, sources which are ideally relevant and credible and conclusions which are based on evidence. Candidates can do this in a variety of ways and, particularly for weaker candidates, the isolation and consideration of the credibility and appropriateness of specific sources can be helpful in encouraging them to support their points and engage in evaluation. However, the most successful presentations were led by the candidate’s synthesis of argument and evidence alongside their personal reflection which were then supported by their assessment of evidence and sources so that the latter did not dominate. Here is a candidate doing precisely this in answering the question, ‘Does investment in higher education positively impact society?’:

And those with a bachelor’s degree earn almost twice as much money as those with only a high School diploma. Georgetown economist Anthony Carnevale even goes on to conclude that this economic differential between those with and without degrees is a median lifetime income of 1 million dollars more than a non-graduate in the U.S. The increasing thing to note is that this dichotomy is expanding. The Education Work Force Policy quantifies that the wage differential of high School vs. a bachelor’s degree over 30 years has grown by almost 150% and the growth in high skill jobs in the future will exacerbate these gaps further. Thus higher education significantly advances the economic life of individuals.

Credible and relevant sources have been selected already by the candidate, and the appropriateness of those choices can then simply be indicated by identifying provenance (e.g. ‘Georgetown economist’). Evidence is introduced by an argumentative proposition, its significance is assessed, links are made with other pieces of evidence and conclusions are drawn.

Comments on Specific Questions

One of the distinctive features of this syllabus is that, for two of the three papers, candidates are invited to set their own questions in consultation with their teachers. This gives candidates an opportunity to define their own agenda and explore an issue which is meaningful to them. By the same token it also issues a challenge and a responsibility. Candidates can limit themselves though inappropriate question choice and formulation, as the ability to set an appropriate question becomes part of the assessment. It is also expected that teachers discuss question choice with candidates and give guidance on this before they set out to work independently on their presentation. Previous reports on both Paper 2 and Paper 3 give extensive guidance on question-setting, including an extended section in the Paper 2 report for June 2010.

It is striking that all of the examples of effective work cited in this report also have effective questions. These should allow for a direct response to the source material as a starting point, organise opposing perspectives in a clear debate and lead to a specific judgement. The most effective questions (which produce the strongest presentations) also clearly signpost key concepts in the debate. For example, ‘Should gender be used to discriminate between candidates for employment?’ and ‘Is “Chinese Parenting” an ethical philosophy for raising children?’ are both effective questions because they include all of these elements. On the other hand, a question such as ‘Should fathers spend more time with their children and less time at work?’ is a clear debate, but lends itself less well to challenging concepts. Any question which begins with ‘how’, such as ‘how does the parents’ relationship with one another affect the children’s development?’ makes it difficult

for the candidate to construct an argumentative debate rather than an explanation. Many Centres are engaged with this guidance and clearly helping their candidates to construct effective questions which connect with the assessment objectives for this paper. This has led to more effective work overall compared with previous sessions.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 9777/04
Independent Research Report

Key Messages

- Do ensure that the question emerges from a full discussion and consideration of its implications and opportunities
- Do consider how evidence is going to be evaluated before finally deciding on a topic
- Do remember that the IRR follows on from and extends the critical approach to evidence developed during the Global Perspectives course
- Do ensure that the question is addressed throughout. The arguments must relate to the question and not just the general topic
- Reflection is an integral part of the process of writing a research report, not an afterthought

General Comments

There was, as in previous years, a great range of topics chosen. Candidates clearly relished the freedom to explore subjects which engaged their interests and in many cases their sympathies and emotions. What emerged was an encouragement by centres to pursue matters which were important to candidates. This gave the writing a flavour and atmosphere which was quite special. Centres are to be congratulated for supporting candidates in what is, for many, a challenging and unprecedented task. The rewards were evident in the teacher report forms which were filled in, generally, in a full and candid way and revealed a high level of personal achievement in pursuing independent research. Even if the quality of the finished report varied, the process which the reports revealed showed that much had been gained – by both students and teachers. Process, in this paper, is an important element. Product, naturally, varied. However, there were some very impressive reports which did indeed seem to go beyond what would be expected of candidates in Level 3 examinations or their equivalents and in some cases the impression was given that Moderators were reading an article in a learned journal or a high end news magazine. A range of work was seen. At the lower end there was some efficient description and evidence of some personal research. Most though did engage with different perspectives and an encouraging number did not merely reference sources but showed a critical sense and were able to discriminate between evidence, not taking it all at face value. The importance of this in an information heavy world cannot be over stressed.

All this has been remarked on in previous reports, but perhaps this year's work showed a greater polarisation than before between Centres and candidates who did understand the vital links between Global Perspectives (GP) and the Report and those who offered what were more like projects with little of the critical sense or use of evidence should have been developed during the GP course. Marking by Centres which did encourage continuity focused very sharply on key objectives and often judged them fairly and with great professionalism, understanding that for higher level marks there had to be very strong evaluation, argument and expression; and also that the work should demonstrate a response to real intellectual challenge. Where there was less emphasis on continuity with GP, marking tended to focus on different qualities than those expected in the mark scheme and from work done by students with grounding in critical understanding. What might have impressed as a general 'project' or research undertaken to explain and describe developments should not have been over-rewarded in work that is specifically intended to carry forward higher level thinking skills. Close attention to the demands and language of the mark scheme is strongly advised when assessing work.

The key points above all relate to these general remarks about the unit and will now be considered.

- Do ensure that the question emerges from a full discussion and consideration of its implications and opportunities

The choice of topic and the refinement of the wording of the question are of vital importance to the success of the IRR in meeting the criteria of the assessment objectives. Advice is available from

Cambridge consultants and Centres are strongly urged to take advantage of this. If advice is rejected, then it should be for a good reason. A topic which offers limited chance for evaluation should not be chosen. 'Why was there an 'Arab Spring?' for instance is unlikely, in itself, to lead to evaluation of evidence. It may do, but only if the candidate really addresses 'What best explains the 'Arab Spring'. However, this is still rather restrictive: the opportunities for judgement of concepts and consideration of different perspectives may still be quite limited. A discussion about the assessment objectives with a student interested in this topic might take his or her beyond explanations to a more concept based report. Are there issues here about the nature of democracy; about the role of social media in political protest; about the intervention of the west in middle eastern affairs; about different models of democracy – how "democratic" was the overthrow of President Morsi; is the western parliamentary model the best democratic method; can society endure direct expressions of popular feeling leading to changes of government; can armies impose democracy? What can be done if what are antidemocratic forces win power democratically? Can religion be separated from politics in the Middle East? Can history be a guide to the likely developments following the Arab Spring? Many of these ideas may not come to anything or be what the candidate wants to pursue. However, without some opening up, the report may be more like a History/Politics essay which explains the background and causes and uses evidence to support explanations. After all it is quite difficult to evaluate an explanation of the abuses, say in Libya before the revolution using critical thinking techniques. It is also difficult to assess the relative importance of a range of causes which may be interlinked. However, more concept-led evidence within a broad perceptive may be more susceptible to judgements and critiques. If there is a view that popular upheaval is justified in removing a democratically elected government that seems to have lost sight of the needs of the people, then its premises, arguments, examples can be examined critically. If there are newspaper articles listing abuses by a president, then it may be a matter of finding corroborate evidence, but it is of limited use merely to say 'this is a newspaper and will be biased.'

This is not to say that questions which are based on factual evidence should be excluded. For example, an investigation into the relative effectiveness of drug-based treatment of forms of depression may require study of the clinical evidence. However, for this to lead to higher levels in evaluation and in terms of intellectual challenge, the candidate does need to be able to access appropriate evidence. There is little point in accumulating reports of studies and then saying 'Dr X is a considerable expert and what is more has a child with acute depression, so both his family circumstances and his years of expertise in research and treatment make him a reliable source' if the counter argument by Dr. Y is going to say much the same 'Dr Y has studies for many years at Harvard and done extensive research and so is a credible source'. The result is stalemate – one expert has a different view from another expert. The crucial discussion about the choice of topic and question should involve a consideration of what are the issues on which the experts disagree? What evidence is being used by both? Can this evidence be discussed in terms of its methodology, or its assumptions, or by its links with other research in order for its validity to be assessed? There are practical issues here – if the information cannot be assessed, then all that the candidate can say is that 'this is from a website and may not be reliable'; 'This is from a newspaper who may wish to sensationalise to sell copies' etc. Thus the idea of investigation competing treatments may be fine, but in practice the subject cannot be studied in depth and so may result in merely a description of different views with relatively superficial comment.

It should be evident now that titles which say 'The United Nations: the way forward' or 'The Diamond Industry and Popular Taste' should not be accepted by the Centre without a lot more discussion. A short check list may help

- Is there a real debate possible in which different perspectives are established?
- Is there a range of accessible evidence available on both sides, as IRR is evidence-based
- Does the question offer real opportunities for response to intellectual challenge?
- Is the question clear? Long and pretentiously phrased questions are not needed to impress. If the question is not clear then it will be very difficult to assess the quality of arguments.
- Does the question offer the chances to use a range of sources critically and will at least some of those sources be challenging.

Thus while it may be interesting to discuss whether foreign football managers are better than English ones, the real issue is whether the sources offer much challenge or whether there are concepts to be assessed or whether the perspectives can go beyond – here are some good foreign managers; here are some bad ones.

The process of formulating, evaluating and modifying questions is not only essential for IRR; it is a worthwhile exercise in itself. It involves reflection; considering criticism; linking aims to objectives and understanding the nature of an iterative process.

- Do consider how evidence is going to be evaluated before finally deciding on a topic

This has been partly dealt with above, but is worth restating. IRR depends heavily on the critical evaluation of a range of evidence. The selection of a topic and question and the availability of evidence should go together. It is not pointless to submit a proposal either to a teacher or to a consultant at Cambridge without some indication of what evidence is going to be used. For serious studies, serious and academic evidence is needed. Without some evidence which is demanding either in terms of content or in terms of its need to be used carefully and critically, a report is not going to demonstrate a high level in A05. If there is little to say about the quality and nature of the evidence then opportunities are going to be restricted to subject it to critical evaluation. In artistic subjects if all the evidence about a view of Shakespeare comes from reference to Shakespeare plays, the views may be assessed (Was Macbeth merely a blood-soaked villain?) but not really evidence. Here critical assessments of the play might be evaluated by the evidence they take from the text; but IRR is not necessarily the same as an English essay and must meet the requirements that a range of evidence is assessed critically. Evidence is not the same as arguments. Thus if the title invited consideration of different views, then those views must be based on evidence.

There is the view that Bismarck was a master planner. This is supported by many older historians who wrote biographies. However the view that he planned Unification was challenged by Taylor and has been also challenged by many modern historians like Boehme and Crankshaw. Wells in his book wrote "Bismarck's control over events has been over stated and in fact he could do little but respond in an intelligent and pragmatic way to events"

This seems evaluative, but it refers not to a given source but to a general view, The candidate needed to identify the older historians, establish why they held the views and on what evidence and then consider the strength of the evidence and any preconceptions, perhaps that the older writers had and anything in the context in which they wrote that might have influenced them. Then by opening all this up their evidence could be considered critically.

If there is going to be a problem identifying precise sources which support the view, then perhaps a different question should be considered, The same could apply to many different topics from a variety of disciplines, The initial planning stage should be one in which potential evidence is considered and also the evaluation of evidence. This is not to say that a complete set of sources needs to be identified – research may throw up more evidence or the whole investigation may develop in an unforeseen way; but there must be the possibility of evaluating evidence and not just commenting on general views such as: some people say that capital punishment is wrong; there are numerous arguments against global warming; many theorists argue that nature is stronger than nurture etc.

- Do remember that IRR follows on from and extends the critical approach to evidence developed in Global Perspectives AS/Short Course.

In Paper 1 there will be two passages either with different views or offering different justifications for a similar view. These passages should be evaluated; the basis on which they hold their view examined critically and the passages compared or contrasted as evidence. In paper 2 there should be different perspectives considered and conclusions reached by critical examination of the evidence. In paper 3 the presentation should consider different perspectives and offer a supported judgement. IRRs must not only use these critical techniques and maintain a similar questioning outlook to evidence and argument, but also extend evaluation and show a sustained critical approach over a longer piece of writing and in the context of a real investigation. In many cases this was the case and the critical sense showed a clear advance and was at the core of a considered judgement about an issue. However, in some cases, the evaluation of evidence was not at the core of the report. Evidence was sometimes merely imported to illustrate arguments or augment descriptions and was taken at face value as in the following example:

As JR Smith and WO Hawkins argue, the case for inherent command of language at an early age is very strong. These writers justify their finding in their study of 1969. The early linguistic abilities of babies are clear as they... (There follows a lengthy explanation)

The views could be evaluated in a number of ways, but this answer was intent on explaining the research done on a complex subject. Though this has value, the essence is to establish the evidence for one perspective (in this case early linguistic development showing inherent linguistic knowledge) and to consider whether there is convincing justification for this as opposed to the counter view which might be that exposure to language rather than inherent attributes is more important.

The views could be evaluated by reference to the authors. Both these writers are experts in their field and are writing for a well-known and respectable linguistic journal. Both have worked in eminent institutes in California etc. As stated before, the problem arises when their academic rivals come from similar backgrounds. It would clearly be ridiculous to say – their view is refuted by an anonymous blog or by somebody I interviewed in my local coffee shop. So alternative views are most likely to be from academics using different evidence or methodology.

Thus the next step is to look at why the writers have come to these conclusions – what is the basis of their findings; what data did they examine; what research is the conclusion based on and how convincing is this? Are their arguments logical or do they make ‘jumps’ or assertions? Is their view corroborated by other evidence, and if so, how strong is this? There is no doubting that this is demanding and takes a lot of thought and research, but that is why the mark bands for this paper are set in a demanding way. For higher level marks in Band 3 for the Assessment Objectives there will be rigorous evaluation, well supported and there will be the intellectual challenging at looking at methodology and going beyond basic *ad hominem* comparison. Also, better responses do focus on this type of critical analysis and do not rely on limited assertions and the origin and possible purpose of the authors of the sources chosen.

The same is true of more abstract and philosophical topics as of scientific, social science or historical topics. Philosophical arguments cannot be proven or disproven by the same methods, but there must be critical evaluation of a type appropriate to the discipline. If arguments for the existence of God or ethical issues are evaluated as religious/philosophical statements then it is the internal logic and consistency of the arguments that must be assessed. It is not pointless to say ‘he is a Hindu and so would believe in reincarnation’. A critical consideration must look at arguments, assumptions and consistency.

In terms of statistical data, it is important to establish what criteria can be used effectively to assess claims. The following example shows some critical sense but also reveals some pitfalls.

World Health Organisation official figures demonstrate that the Indian median age is 25 years. The objective of the WHO is to provide better health and standards of living for people. The WHO would not be seen to have any political or economic agenda, yet the question of its headquarters could have some implementation on figures and statistics represented. The WHO is based in Geneva, Switzerland. Because of this some officials may want to boost growth in their own Swiss economy by downgrading the median age in India’s economy it could help its own figures look stronger.

This is somewhat problematic and speculative analysis brought about by supposition that researching into the origin of the WHO and finding to be Geneva may mean that there is bias. Earlier the candidate had told us that the CIA figures were similar at 26.5 thus a comparison of the two might have helped to establish the relative reliability of the figures. The chance to look at how the figures were arrived at was lost. Thus there was some evaluation, but it was uneven. A critical approach had been taken from GP but not really extended.

- Do ensure that the question is addressed throughout. The arguments must relate to the question and not just the general topic

Many reports did offer sound arguments and counter arguments based firmly on the question, but some were unable to remain focused over 5000 words on the question set. Often this was because the question did not really permit an extended discussion or because candidates felt that a long descriptive introduction was necessary and then general description established itself and the actual question got lost.

Assess the view that Slavery was the most important cause of the Civil War is an example of a question that requires a relative judgement about causation. If the report simply explained and illustrated the importance of the key factor, then explained and illustrated other factors then offered a view ‘Thus we may see that many elements brought about Civil War, then what is really being

answered for most of the time is 'Explain the causes of the Civil War'. The question is really demanding from the start the establishment of different perspectives with supporting argument

Slavery became an issue in Americas in the 1800s when the population started growing westwards, abolitionism began to grow and influential people, such as John Quincy Adams and Frederick Douglas were becoming known. American people were beginning to realise that slavery was a problem as many rebellions were occurring and that it was unconstitutional' is therefore not a very strong opening.

Slavery has been seen as the root cause of the Civil War because it was at the root of sectional disagreements and was the cause of increasing debate. However, not only were there important differences between North and South which were not specifically tied to slavery, such as economic disparity, there were sectional issues that predated concern about slavery. Also, it is necessary to separate the extreme rhetoric of the abolitionists and ardent 'pro slavers' from the decisions taken in 1860 about secession and the response to secession. The break-up of the traditional party system and the election of Lincoln who represented only Northern voters caused a crisis over the nature and purpose of the Union that was not entirely the result of disputes over slavery. 'The bulk of the South does not own slaves and the bulk of the North has little interest in the fate of slaves' wrote the Wyoming newspaper 'The Enquirer in March 1860. However the Kentucky newspaper 'The Record' could not be clearer. This is a war about the future of Slavery which is inextricably linked to the future of the South'. Contemporaries did not all take the same view of the nature of the War.

This opening seems to indicate that the relative importance of the issue is going to run through the answer. Needless to say, long accounts of the fighting would not be appropriate. It is also worth mentioning, particularly on scientific topics, that long descriptive scene setting is not necessary. Definitions are vital and some background is helpful, but three pages of description before the report begins to discuss the issues are certainly not required.

In the best answers, the debate was set out clearly; the question was kept under clear and constant review throughout and the conclusion and reflection were both firmly focused on the issue.

- Reflection is an integral part of the process of writing a research report, not an afterthought

The analogy of using evidence to make an important decision has been used to explain the critical path. Say a decision must be made about whether to apply for a job abroad. First of all, basic information must be gathered in terms of evidence – the nature of the work, salary and conditions, future prospects, cost of living, educational options for children; whether other family members could find work; travel costs. These are considered within the context of broad perspectives – some of which have purely factual content – salary, pension etc.; some have long term elements – where the job will lead; some have a strong emotional content – will the job give satisfaction? Will there be problems of homesickness? Will living abroad affect friends and family? Two broad viewpoints may emerge – the job is good in terms of career development and is interesting and well-paid. However, there is an element of risk in working with new colleagues in a different environment and much may depend on how well language will be mastered. The job offers good chances for family to see another country and for children to broaden horizons; however education may be disputed and there may be strains as there are family members at home who do need support.

The evidence must be weighed and ultimately one factor may swing the balance – perhaps the long term job opportunities and a decision is reached with some reservations. However, it would be unusual for the decision then not to be the subject of reflection. What are the implications of the decision; does it need to be modified – for example should children be educated at home and only join the family for holidays to keep an element of continuity? Should the contract be short-term and reviewed in the light of experience? Is there any more information needed before a final decision – should people who have worked abroad be asked for their opinion? In the real world, the reflection is essential and will be at the heart of the whole process. Also, there will be on-going evaluation. If the managing director has given assurance that after a few months, working abroad will bring promotion, can this be relied on? Is this a person who is credible, but more important is this going to be confirmed by contract and are there examples of other people who have taken posts on this basis and been rewarded? So in real life 'evidence' is being weighed constantly and there is on-going reflection about whether there is enough reliable information to make a decision and about what the implications of the decision is. If therapy is decided to be less effective than medication for treating child depression, then what are the implications of that judgement? If it is essential to have the High Speed train then are there implications that need to be considered? Has the decision been taken on enough evidence? Are there areas of ambiguity that have to be admitted even if the basic decision is to approve the train?

The reflection should not be bolted on to meet arbitrary requirements but should be regarded as a vital part of any evaluative process and deserves more attention and thought than was the case in some answers. Where it did appear and went beyond a sort of personal diary. (When I began this project I thought that...but after doing all this, I now think.....So this has changed my view) and engages with the implications of the judgements made and a consideration of the adequacy of the evidence used, then a real academic and, indeed life skill has been developed,

In terms of Assessment Objectives, AO1 was generally well assessed with explanations relating to the decisions taken about the process of research. Teachers should not, however, comment on the quality of the writing here.

AO2 remains more difficult for some Centres to assess and it would be helpful to show where evaluation – that is distinct judgement about evidence, not merely explanation of its content – has been made and also the level of assessment. References to reliability based on suppositions about the author should not be over-rewarded. If there is limited marginal comment about evaluation, then marks for A02 will not be high.

AO3 is a holistic judgement about how well argument has been sustained, whether there are different views and – importantly whether there is any serious and worthwhile reflection. It is helpful to indicate stretches of descriptive writing and irrelevance in the margin.

AO4 should be decided in communication with the teacher as well as how far the writing has met the requirements of the AO. Also it is not merely the absence of error but how well the argument has been conveyed.

AO5 is not just about subject matter. Complex matters may be treated in a simplistic or very sophisticated way using critical technique that would not be necessary in the course of the subject study at A level or equivalents.

As these comments have been made in previous reports, it is not necessary to dwell on them again here.

Finally, it is the task of reports to raise issues that will help students to progress and Centres to assess more accurately. However, the level of commitment by many students to a demanding task and the range and inherent interest of the topics investigated make this an outstanding element of the Pre-U courses. Every student will have benefited from undertaking this research and though the very top answers showed a grasp of debate and a developed critical sense that would have been appropriate at University level, that is not the only measure of success. Displaying personal interests; the use of different evidence; the engagement with research; the interaction with the teacher and the independence of study achieved are all vital life and study skills, and students should be proud of developing them.