

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 1340/01
Written Paper

Key messages

- Candidates need to focus their answers on the specific demands of the question.
- Answers given by candidates should be proportional to the marks awarded. Lengthy answers do not necessarily equate to accurate answers, especially for question 1.
- The skill of evaluation expects answers to go beyond a comparison of documents or description of content and to contain an element of explanation and exemplification that justifies a point of view or argument presented.
- Evaluation dictates that there is some judgement made, whether this is through the process of personal reflection and reasoning given in an answer or at the end of an answer as a more traditional conclusion.

General comments

The standard this year was very good overall and most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the demands of the set questions. Candidates engaged well with the two documents.

Most candidates used their time effectively and presented answers in proportion to the marks available, either through careful planning or good use of the time allowed. Very few candidates ran out of time but there were some who spent too long answering question 2 to the detriment of question 3.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was worth six marks and required candidates to accurately identify and explain three clear reasons from the document to illustrate ways in which the author of Document 1 was opposed to fracking.

As this is a skills-based paper, one of the most important skills is the ability to recognise key aspects of an argument or to select clear examples given in an argument. This question expected candidates to be precise and pick out the possible reasons the author was opposed to fracking and then explain them – the explanation requiring some form of personal summarising whilst remaining within the parameters of the text itself. The three examples could have been drawn from several given in the document.

Answers that scored full marks either used extracts from the text as above to select the key reasons and explain them, or, presented the reasons and explanations using their own wording or re-phrasing.

Some answers were detailed and explained fully but had gone beyond what was required for the marks in dealing with just three reasons. Others identified and explained more than three reasons; whilst most of these answers were awarded full marks available by the examiner accounting for the best three identified and explained, this was not the most efficient way of answering the question. Attention in future should be given to the precise demands of the question and spending time on this focus alone. A small number of answers confused reasons with explanations. Some candidates quoted from Document 1 to illustrate the reasons and to help with their explanations. Some answers relied more heavily on quotations than others and in such instances the explanations required some more development. The best answers used references and brief quotations to identify and explain.

Question 2

The first point to mention here is that the question expected both strengths and weaknesses although the mark scheme is clear that the focus on both strengths and weaknesses did not need to be even. The skill of evaluation assessed here was expecting identification of an element of the argument that could be seen as strong or weak with a good explanation of why this was the case in relation to the author's complete argument against fracking.

A small number of responses answered on the strengths and weaknesses of fracking, that is, the issue itself, rather than the argument that the author presented. Such responses were limited to Level 1 at best.

Some candidates seemed to use a structure for their response or a specific formula for answering such a question. This ranged from reference to author, style of writing and language used to more technical and critical use of phrases such as bias, vested interest, ability to perceive/see, straw man argument and fallacies such as cause and correlation. Sometimes the use of such a framework provided effective support for the candidate to explore relevant aspects of the author's argument about fracking. Nonetheless, it must be re-iterated that as this paper is skills-based, such a framework must not drive candidate responses because it was clear that some candidates were struggling to find aspects of their framework in this particular document. For example, it was evident from some planning that candidates brought with them key aspects of an argument to analyse even if they were not present in, or relevant to, the document. The best answers differentiated between what was relevant and what was not, selected appropriately and then drew clear exemplification from the document to support their process of reasoning. It may help in future with such a technique if candidates were encouraged in their planning to check the list against what is actually evident in the argument and cross out irrelevant aspects before starting to write their answers. This would help them maintain focus and relevance.

In general, the best answers were able to see strengths and weaknesses; although there were invariably more weaknesses identified and evaluated which was acceptable. On the whole, although the evaluation element of this type of question was improved this year, true evaluation would explain specific reasons as to why an aspect is strong or weak rather than just saying, 'the argument is weak because it is one-sided'. An example of developed evaluation would be something like this, 'the argument is weak because it is one-sided and does not even recognise the potential benefits of fracking which means it is not balanced. Even if the conclusion recognises this, as it stands the conclusion is weak because of not doing so'

Question 3

This was better answered than in previous series and few candidates were achieving Level 1 which was very encouraging.

First of all, the questions expected a focus on how the argument in Document 2 was more convincing than in Document 1. There were a number of different approaches to this but what was encouraging is that answers this year were really attempting to answer the specific focus of 'convincing', even if it was just an 'add-on' consideration at the end of the answer or the end of a paragraph. What was clear from the cohort was that the most effective were those answers directly focused on how Document 2 was more convincing than Document 1 but also recognised its limitations.

There were some responses that went through Document 2 and used it as a basis for comparison paragraph by paragraph, although this was not the most efficient way as there were often digressions and this often led into more descriptive elements to the answer as opposed to evaluative observations.

Weaker answers tended to be a simple comparison of content of each document with the very weakest merely restating what was written without commentary.

Many answers were reasonable but not, strictly speaking, refined. Such responses may have had the following characteristics:

- Some answers just stated or described the differences between the two documents. Such answers obviously did not access the higher levels of response.
- No answers were reported as just dealing with fracking itself as a focus, although there were one or two examples of answers that were drawn into this part way through.
- Some answers simply described how each document's argument was convincing in itself without reference to the other document.

- Others evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of each document in turn and then answered the convincing focus at the end, but sometimes with no strong connection to what had been written before.

Common features of the stronger answers were that they had a clear plan and execution identifying and weighing up the strengths and weaknesses in each document and used examples from the text to explore the issue of which one was most convincing. Some used aspects of the argument such as bias, the credibility of evidence and reliability of each author as a basis for comparison and drawing a conclusion. The style of writing included in stronger answers used expressions such as “this might suggest....because...” and “this means that Document 2 is more/less convincing...” to clearly pinpoint their evaluative aspects, although this was not always fully developed in explaining why it was the case in relation to the preceding analysis.

Despite this, the overall standard of answers was good for question 3 with many insightful and different justifications offered. Almost all answers had a clear conclusion, the quality of which related to the process of reasoning that had gone before and the skills demonstrated in justifying this, rather than to a definitive answer expected.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 1340/02
Essay

Key messages

- Most candidates presented reasonably structured essays
- Some candidates did not present different perspectives with global relevance
- Reflection on personal learning should be more extensive
- Suggestions for further research need to be explained fully

General comments

Overall, this session, the quality of work and levels of achievement were good. Most candidates responded well to the task and appeared to enjoy researching a global issue of personal interest. Candidates generally understand the complexity of social, economic and technological change, and want to respond positively to global challenges and issues. Candidates and Centres are to be congratulated on their achievements.

Many candidates are learning to reflect upon the implications of research into global issues for their own personal beliefs, values and lifestyle. Candidates are also gaining in confidence in writing about their own learning and research.

In general, the research for the essays was completed well and many candidates used a wide range of sources, usually gathered from the Internet. Some candidates gathered evidence using primary research methods, typically interviews and questionnaires. The sources and evidence were mainly relevant to the perspectives being assessed.

There were some excellent essays that were logically structured and contained a clear line of argument that led to a conclusion which answered the research question posed within the essay title. Most essays considered at least two different perspectives on an issue of global significance. However, some candidates failed to choose an issue of global significance and were therefore restricted in the marks that could be awarded.

Unfortunately, some candidates did not analyse the arguments and evidence for different perspectives. The most common error was to simply describe the global issue. For example, in considering censorship of the Internet, essays that described the causes and consequences of government control and surveillance rather than evaluating contrasting points of view about the need for control and surveillance, perhaps to increase security and prevent crime and terrorism, did not fulfil key marking criteria.

The approach adopted for the essay should genuinely provide opportunity for a candidate to evaluate different perspectives. Teachers must therefore guide candidates towards essay titles and plans that allow candidates to contrast and compare perspectives in an evaluative way. To keep the essay manageable in scope, candidates are advised to compare only two different perspectives on the chosen global issue.

Most candidates presented essays which were close to the word limit of 2000 words. Candidates who presented essays with less than 1750 words tended to provide insufficient material and evidence about each perspective or only explored the issues superficially. Centres are also reminded that any material in the body of the essay over 2000 words in length will not be assessed or count in the award of marks.

To improve performance further, candidates should be encouraged to:

- avoid assertion without explanation and evidence
- avoid long accounts of personal opinion and anecdotal comment
- evaluate reasoning and evidence in sources by referring to both strengths and weaknesses

- practice and include reflection and the evaluation of their own work, perhaps through peer assessment and group exercises; the focus should be upon explaining practically how the research and essay could be improved if it was repeated or more time was available.

Comments on specific questions

In this section of the Report some further guidance is given to Centres on how to improve the quality of the essays.

1. Evaluation of sources – candidates are expected to evaluate the sources used in the essay. Many candidates only describe the source. Some candidates evaluate without using the argument and evidence within sources to develop their argument. It is helpful for the candidate to describe and apply the content of the source to the essay title and global issue.

The assessment criteria for the essay allow marks to be awarded for the evaluation of the sources presented as evidence for each of the perspectives being explored. It is therefore very important that candidates discuss the strengths and weaknesses of most sources and in particular that they challenge arguments, claims and evidence.

Candidates should think about potential bias, weaknesses in the methodology, the credibility of arguments, sample sizes, expertise, validity and reliability, and accuracy. The tone of language and clarity of argument might also be assessed by candidates.

2. Reflection and personal learning – candidates should devote at least 1–2 paragraphs to describing and explaining how the process of research and exploration of the global issue has affected their own personal perspectives and beliefs about the issue. This might include:

- a description of their main learning points
- changes to their own beliefs and values
- possible changes to their own behaviour or lifestyle.

3. Limitations of the research and suggestions for further research – personal reflection often leads to the recognition that there is still much to learn and that work can be improved. An important part of reflection for the essay is therefore to identify aspects of the global issue or perspectives that could be better understood through further research. However, this part of the essay is often omitted completely or treated superficially.

Candidates should describe at least two examples of relevant further research and explain how this further research could improve understanding of the global issue under consideration.

An example of a weak description of further research is:

'There was not much time to do this research because I started late. So I could improve my research by spending more time to get extra sources. This is my idea for further research. This could be on the Internet and the WWW.'

This example acknowledges the need for further research but does not clearly identify the focus or implications of the further research for understanding the global issue.

A much better example of suggestions for further research is:

'There are several ways that further research could improve this research. Firstly, the interviews on attitudes towards mercy killing when people are suffering from terminal illnesses suggested that there might be differences in the attitudes of men and women. I therefore tried to find sources that explored this difference but could not find any. So further research could include using questionnaires given to both men and women to test their attitudes to see if there are really any variations between the sexes. For example, I believe that it might be possible to test the view that men are more likely to be in favour of mercy killing in cases of terminal illness. This could be due to differences in attitudes towards pain and suffering between men and women, often noted by psychologists. The search for sources on this point could also be extended.'

Another area for further research could be about the costs and practicalities of euthanasia. In this research it was only possible to explore attitudes in general. For example, how could euthanasia be paid for and where would it take place? Different parts of the world may have different approaches to funding to compare.

Lastly, the issue of mercy killing raises ethical concerns. Further research into different religious or cultural groups could be helpful. This would make the research more globally relevant and extend the study further.'

This example explains several ways to conduct further research using new methods and sources, focused upon issues raised by the research. The implications of the further research for understanding the issue are explicit.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 1340/03

Presentation

Key messages

- Presentations containing clearly structured debates supported the achievement of learners, but those who built on these with more individual and explorative approaches tended to produce work at the highest levels
- A focus on the evaluation of the credibility of sources supported learners at the lower end of the range, but the most successful presentations synthesised a wide range of sources in support of perspectives and their larger argument
- The recognition of more than one perspective is of foundational importance in this paper; conceptualised and fully explored and evaluated perspectives supported the strongest presentations
- Conclusions are most successful when they are supported by evidence, responsive to the substance of the learner's question, and developed sufficiently in order to be fully reflective.

General comments

Responses to the Pre-Release Materials

There was a pronounced split in responses to the pre-release material this year, with at least half of all learners basing their presentations on the minor topic of religious freedom in Documents 7 and 8. Where presentations took other routes there was a division between those who engaged with the issue of crowdsourcing directly and others who took the opportunity to research social media more generally. Where innovative directions were taken, this produced good results with distinctive lines of enquiry. An example of this was 'Has the emergence of social media helped women in the fight for equality?' Presentations which took more generic approaches to the issue (comparing different levels of connectivity to the Internet, or learning with trolling or controlled usage with addiction) had less scope for engagement with focused arguments from the booklet and beyond.

The burka ban proved a popular option for many learners, especially for those who took the debate between Eltahawy and Street in Document 8 as a supportive starting point. This enabled a significant number of presentations to establish a clear debate between two perspectives and to reach a conclusion. However, by the same token this approach could be limited as a straightforward, binary contrast, and some learners responded by giving information about Islamic dress and culture rather than engaging with analysed and evaluated perspectives. Exceptions were when learners broadened the debate to encompass related ideas, such as that of gender equality in the question 'Does the burka hinder the progress of women?' Alternatively, there were responses to Kenan Malik's more challenging argument in Document 7, such as the question 'To what extent does postmodernism threaten religion in modern society?'

A small number of learners resorted to questions which only made a tenuous link with the source material. Presentations on the Internet in general did not in themselves engage with any of the arguments in the material: something more specific was required. Equally, however, learners tended to recognise that it is only necessary to engage with, at minimum, one line of argument or piece of evidence from one of the documents as a starting point for their own research in order to produce an effective presentation. Global treatment, on the other hand, was variable. Many of the presentations focussing on the burka failed to move beyond French borders or, at best, Europe. Others however, drew comparative studies between the West and the developing world with success, or identified a range of examples from Western European countries and Islamic states in the Middle East, organising them into perspectives. The best presentations used specific aspects of particular pre-released sources to produce a tightly focused and effective question.

Structure

Many learners structured their presentations effectively, following a common process of defining and contextualising the issue, exploring each perspective and then coming to a conclusion. Sometimes learners relied too heavily on the wording and structure of their sources, especially sources from the material supplied, and this limited the effectiveness of their arguments. Precise and judicious quotation of specific claims and evidence from particular pre-released sources was much more effective as a launching point for the learners' own research and arguments. The most successful learners, in this way, moved beyond a schematic approach and constructed their own coherent arguments which integrated the deconstruction and synthesis of challenging sources of their own. It is also worthwhile remembering that 15 minutes in total are allowed for the presentation. Work which comes in significantly under this limit does not allow the candidate to fully demonstrate their achievement against the mark scheme as it is much harder to define an issue and debate, give empathetic space to each perspective and then to reach a reflective and supported conclusion.

Sources

Nearly all learners recognised the invitation to research beyond the pre-released material, so a range of sources was included. Where these only moved a limited distance beyond what was provided, or only established the issue, rather than contrasting arguments or perspectives, the impact of the research done was less effective. Here one can contrast a presentation entitled 'How can digital technology stimulate business growth?' which combined Document 1 with an A-Level Economics textbook to provide some examples establishing the issue with the previously mentioned presentation on the burka and the progression of women, which seamlessly synthesised the issue with perspectives supported by a rich range of journalistic, academic and polemical sources. Synthesis – comparing and contrasting specific points across more than one source in order to develop an argument – continued to be a key differentiator at the higher levels.

Some learners would have been helped by focusing less on credibility. Although a focus on source credibility can allow presentations to demonstrate a concern with specific details of sources and the ability to evaluate, this also leaves less space for the identification and evaluation of perspectives as it can occupy a significant proportion of the presentation. Researching the background of authors in order to fully evaluate their credibility also does not in itself help presentations to gain credit. It is additionally worth bearing in mind the status of judgements made by authors. For example, one presentation quoted Malik's statement of principle that 'most western societies have come to think of "religious freedom" as a special kind of liberty' but then goes on to remark that 'Malik's article can also be seen as unreliable because it is based on opinion', without seeing that some of his statements are necessarily founded on opinion, or that this opinion might be evaluated by undertaking further research to locate examples and counter-examples.

Citation and referencing of sources are rewarded by the mark scheme, but the requirements for a presentation are different to those which might be demanded by an essay. Elaborate bibliographies are less important than clear and precise citation of each source as it is used in the presentation itself. Here, specific names of authors and publications are much more helpful than references to 'web pages' and are also much more likely to allow presentations to demonstrate deliberate 'selection' (Level 3) rather than straightforward 'use' (Level 2) of sources.

Treatment of Alternative Perspectives

Again, nearly all candidates recognised that more than one perspective was crucial and allowed space for those different arguments and world-views in their presentations. Occasionally, learners foregrounded their lack of empathy by phrasing their title as a statement, for example 'Religion is a private matter and should only come into School life as a subject on the curriculum'. Here the learner set about proving their conclusion that 'religion should not play a large part in Schools', arguing that although 'School assemblies are an important feature of School life', their ethical dimension does not necessitate 'acts of worship'.

In contrast to this, the presentation on postmodernism and religion patiently and sympathetically contrasted sociological, postmodernist and faith-based approaches to religion, demonstrating how each challenged the assumptions of the others in a variety of different ways. Another very effective presentation, 'Should religious freedom be restricted by the law?' began by acknowledging Malik's argument for total religious freedom within the limits of avoiding harm to others or their rights, but then sharply sketched out the limitations of his view and then identified and developed evaluations of 'three distinct paradigms' of 'qualified rights, demographics and national security versus the interference of belief' as solutions to this. Both pieces of work had in common the ability to quickly and sharply define terms and arguments, and then to develop

conceptualised perspectives closely and carefully supported by evidence. This type of approach tends to generate Level 5 work, although many more learners successfully moved to Levels 3 and 4 by clearly identifying and grouping their arguments into contrasting perspectives in a way which responded relevantly to their question.

Conclusions

The majority of learners included a conclusion in their presentation. For those who did not, this was a limiting factor, as one of the six key criteria in the mark scheme is entirely devoted to the existence and quality of the conclusion. Simply including all of the elements helped many learners to score in the middle part of the mark range, and it was striking that the vast majority demonstrated their awareness that they require a question, at least two perspectives, linked sources and a supported conclusion. This only became a limiting factor when an overly schematic approach was taken to the presentation, using this as a generic template, and this made it harder to access the higher mark levels.

The majority of learners produced relevant conclusions which were supported by evidence and hence scored in Level 3 for this criterion. Those who relied on personal reflection to reach an answer were limited to Level 2. Where learners did not reach a clear and relevant conclusion, this was largely due to questions which did not lend themselves to this, such as 'What is meant by religious freedom and is it the same in all countries?' Here, not only does the question call for information rather than argument, it is really two questions joined together and hence sends the learner in two different directions. Alternatively, some presentations referred back to their evaluation of source credibility rather than the substance of their question. An example of this was the presentation which responded to the question 'Do we need religion to create a moral society?' with the judgement that 'the sources that supported perspective B are more reliable and credible, thus proving my hypothesis'.

The most effective conclusions, as in previous series, were given the space deserved by this important element within the context of the 15 minute presentation as a whole, and used this scope to develop over two stages, gathering together key evidence from the preceding argument then using it in order to come to a final judgement. These were nuanced and substantive, such as this culmination to a conclusion responding to the question, 'How useful is crowdsourcing in aiding scientific research?'

Overall, the existence of examples supporting both perspectives so strongly indicates that crowdsourcing is a tool that can be effective in aiding scientific research, but requires great care when it is used, as it can easily produce inaccuracies and be ultimately not worth the resources. This conclusion can be seen to emerge from many of the articles, as the issues with crowdsourcing raised are generally due to its misuse rather than its inherent failure to deliver – suggesting that the real issue is not with the process of crowdsourcing, rather its use.

Comments on specific questions

As in previous examination series, a distinctive feature of this component is that learners develop their own questions in response to the pre-released material, with the support of their teachers, before working on the presentation themselves. Therefore, the formulation of an effective question which meets the demands of the syllabus is crucial. Good questions have a single focus (that is, they do not combine what should be two questions) and are organised around a debate which would lead to a potential conclusion. Question stems which are descriptive, for example, 'How have developments in technology affected the music industry?', do not do this and tend to produce one-sided information about an issue. It is also helpful if questions engage with specific points of argument or evidence in at least one of the pre-released documents but also allow for the inclusion and development of the learner's own research. Very few presentations selected questions which were completely irrelevant to the material ('Why do people believe in the paranormal?' was one) but these also tended to be descriptive in nature and also relied on personal reflection rather than evidence.