

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Paper 9777/04
Independent Research Report

Key Messages

- Please annotate in such a way as to show how and you have awarded marks.
- Please consider that Paper 4 should be a continuation of Papers 1-3 and not a 'stand alone' exercise.
- If questions have not been submitted to CIE for advice, please consider how they will open up a sustained discussion.
- Please consider the basis for assessing AO5 carefully.

General Comments

With only a small number of candidates entering in the November series, this report cannot be extensive and the attention of the Centres who submitted work is drawn to the report for June 2015 where a wider range of issues were considered.

Comments on Assessment Objectives

General Comments

Strengths:

- There was often an obvious interest in the topics chosen and a real sense of engagement with important issues.
- In general the work was evidence based and not simply a general essay.
- Most of the work was clearly written and appropriately presented.
- At the higher levels there was some perceptive assessment of evidence and some well supported arguments.

Weaknesses:

- Some work lacked evidence of evaluation so was not really developing the skills of GP and seemed more like an essay supported by some footnoted sources.
- Sometimes candidates lost sight of the question posed and wrote more on the general topic.
- In some pieces of work there was not always sufficient reflection on the process of research.
- Conclusions did not always follow logically from the preceding analysis.

Continuity with GP

The extended analysis of the IRR is intended to develop the critical skills of the GP units. The critical analysis of the extracts in Paper 1 should lay the basis, for example, for consistent critical analysis of arguments and evidence in the IRR. The type of critical assessment practised in paper 2 should inform the wider research and writing of IRR. Without this critical underpinning then the IRR becomes a sort of information gathering exercise with different views being explained but little attempt made to offer a supported judgement based on evaluation of evidence. The marking is skills and not content based, so credit should not be given for detailed descriptions or even explanations which might be the case if this were a 'normal' subject based project. This is often stressed in advice given by consultants to candidates when submitting OPFs and it must be stressed again here, Marking of the IRR must be based on critical assessment in AO2 and AO3 and must show where work is showing a genuinely critical sense. Without the higher level skills then much work

may not really show the response to intellectual challenge required by AO5. The mere description of complex views and theories is not as demanding as attempts to assess them.

Assessing IRR

It is important that work should be annotated. Centres are still either submitting work without any comments or offering only brief marginal comments and no final explanation of marks awarded. Sometimes marks are not stated on the work itself, just on the mark sheets. In order to mark accurately, Centres must annotate and use the terminology of the mark scheme. There must too be a judgement about the quality of the Assessment Objective. If evidence is evaluated, then how well is this done? Is it merely superficial and based on the origin of the source, or does it question assumptions and consider the quality and support for the arguments, corroborating and using contextual knowledge from other evidence? Marginal annotations should point this out and not merely indicate 'AO2' or 'AO3'. If there is significant irrelevance or mere assertion, then this should be indicated; conversely, where there is strong and well-focused writing firmly based on evidence, then this should also be shown. Annotation is the Centre's chance to show the Moderator the strengths of the candidates and to make a case for the marks awarded. It is also vital for Centre marking to show both strengths and weaknesses in terms of the specific mark scheme and not in terms of a general assessment of a candidate. Credit may well be given for personal qualities and research skills in AO1, but AO2 and AO3 especially should be based on product not process.

AO5

This is often difficult for Centres but if very low marks are given then it should be clearly explained why the work was significantly below what might be expected for a candidate of this age and how the work did not engage with any challenge either in terms of subject matter or in terms of the approach. Work does have to be quite basic and limited to get only 1 mark. On the other hand, work which is predominantly explanatory or descriptive and does not tackle a particularly demanding subject should not be over rewarded. This is a Pre U qualification and its mark scheme reflects the opportunity given for candidates to work at the highest level. It must be stressed that it is not always a matter of addressing complex subject matter. Poorly understood and uncritical studies of complex intellectual or scientific topics merely to show 'challenge' will not score highly. Searching studies of what might seem to be undemanding topics which look at competing methodologies and evaluate evidence in a sophisticated way will, however, be well rewarded. Explanation of the marks awarded for this AO is particularly important.

It is a pleasure to read much committed and interesting work which confirmed the enormous educational value of this paper as a preparation for further study and adult life in general.