



## **GCE**

### **Critical Thinking**

**Advanced GCE A2 H452**

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H052**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2014**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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# F501 Introduction to Critical Thinking

## General Comments

June 2014 saw an extended range of performance that accessed the very top range of marks, up to 73/75 marks. In some cases, on otherwise sound scripts, there were nil-responses or the occasional unfocused answer. These were questions across the paper. It may be that without the January examination, revision focusing upon the skills required for unit 1 would be advantageous.

Candidates used their skills well to respond strongly to the following questions:

- Q4 stating assumption
- Q5 suggesting one reason
- Q7 assessing credibility of a document
- Q9 assessing credibility of one claim.

The analysis questions tended to challenge candidates' skills the most, especially Q2 naming the argument element and explaining this. The strongest answers involving analysis were found in Q1(c) identifying examples and Q1(d) identifying argument element indicator words, where candidates had three opportunities for success in each.

Candidates appropriately used a wide spread of specialist terms, especially in Section B, where the use of credibility criteria is central to the assessment required. This helped candidates to be successful in Q7 and Q9 above and in Q10 making a reasoned case. The answers to the analysis questions suggested that candidates knew of the terms required in Section A. They just needed to develop the expertise to apply them as successfully as those in Section B.

Most candidates managed their time very well, reaching Q10 with sufficient time to present a full bodied reasoned case, often with a plan to tackle this. The minority that had a curtailed Q10 were often those who had many extended answers on the continuation sheets. Candidates need to be guided by the spaces available after each question as to the length of the answer required. Where 3 lines are provided, an answer of two paragraphs would normally indicate that the candidate needed to give a more focused answer.

Where continuation sheets were used, candidates clearly indicated this and labelled their additional material with the question numbers. This helped to ensure that their extra material could be readily recognised.

More centres are making use of the dispensation to use a computer where candidates' writing is difficult to read. In a subject where meaning can change with one word, it is important that the examiner is able to decipher every word. Centres are therefore urged to make use of this where appropriate.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Question No 1

1(a) This question discriminated well those who could identify the main thrust of the argument and correctly identify a conclusion, rather than other reasoning against it. Some omitted 'We should recognise', whilst others gave 'We should still consider' which supports rather than counters the building of additional runways.

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1(b) Most were able to home in on the hypothetical element, with the strongest identifying the hypothetical reason. Others gained partial performance marks for the hypothetical conclusion 'As a result London will become an international backwater.' Candidates need to use the argument element indicator words in the text, here 'as' and 'as a result' to help them to discriminate between reasons and conclusions.

1(c) This question discriminated those who could distinguish instances from definitive lists. Again argument element indicator words in the text, 'including' and 'like', signalled the examples. Many correctly identified at least two of the examples. Others incorrectly gave 'parks' etc. as their third answer or names of European airports such as Schipol.

Many give lists of examples for an answer, rather than a single example. Any one correct example in that list was credited. Some included a large amount of extra material and were unable to access any marks. Candidates need to be able to extract a single example from the surrounding reasoning, including from other examples.

1(d) Previous questions on argument element indicator words had been susceptible to candidates learning lists and regurgitating these, in the hope that some would hit the mark. This question now discriminates whether candidates can use these words as signalling argument elements in the text.

Most were able to identify at least one of the argument indicator words signalling the conclusions. When it came to 'despite', the strongest answers indicated a counter reason and the weakest a counter-assertion. It was noticeable that candidates who made this error also didn't identify the correct answer in 1 (a), highlighting the need to be able to distinguish assertion from conclusion in counter reasoning.

## Question No 2

2(a) This had been seen as a straightforward question of a simple argument comprising a reason signalled by 'as', leading to a conclusion. A majority gave a correct answer, with others giving a whole array of answers. The latter were mostly within striking distance as they tended to be argument elements such as 'reason', 'example' or 'evidence' rather than the names of flaws. Some did give generalities such as 'claim' or 'statement' or 'persuasion'.

2(b) Of those that had identified a conclusion in 2(a), most gained 1 mark in 2(b) for the explanation that a conclusion is supported by a reason. The strongest went on to refer to a conclusion being the point of persuasion.

## Question No 3

The strongest gave focused and developed assessments. Many commented on the evidence in general terms. For 3(a) and (3b) a common response gaining no marks was 'There is no evidence to support this.'

3(a) Many correctly referred to these particular amenities, some going on to assess the negative impact of an airport nearby making them unattractive. The weakest commented upon generalities, such as 'People might not like beaches.'

3(b) Many recognised the possibility there would also be negative effects, or that Foster had a vested interest to exaggerate. The strongest went on to develop this with an explanation. The weakest gave overdrawn assessments such as 'architects know nothing about economics'.

3(c) Many identified that the report was dated, the strongest developing why that might make the data incorrect, such as recent aircraft having better protection systems. A few recognised that the report was made about a different area and assessed its relevance.

Where candidates focused upon risk, few demonstrated understanding of this. A common response was 'They don't know it will happen'. Some misunderstood that the strike would happen at the end of the risk period, so 'too far away to worry about it now'. Others thought that it was implausible as 'The birds would hear the aircraft coming.' Others cited their own solutions such as 'Sending the birds up north would stop the risk and they wouldn't be a problem there.'

#### Question No 4

Many candidates gained 2 or 3 marks for 4(a) and 4(b). Two marks were awarded where the assumption stated was overdrawn such as, 'Conditions for building an airport will be the same in London as they were in Hong Kong.' Those gaining no marks simply restated the reasoning such as 'They would have to destroy the bird habitats.'

#### Question No 5

Many scored all 3 marks here for a relevant reason with no additional argument elements. For those who included extraneous material, it was commonly a further conclusion and less commonly an explanation or an example.

#### Question No 6

Most identified the correct conclusion. Others incorrectly focused upon 'argued that' and identified 'the TEA would be placed in an ideal location' as the conclusion. Assessment of the reason was often correct and gained partial performance marks. Very few examined the link between the reason and the conclusion. Those that did do this gave very focused answers. Those assessing 'the link is weak', without explanation, gained no marks for this.

#### Question No 7

Those that clearly examined the credibility of the document often scored well. Those who discussed Norman Foster only, with no link to the document, substantially reduced the marks available to them. This was a common error on low scoring scripts. Candidates do need to make sure that the quote does support the assessment, as only the strongest answers gained marks for this.

#### Question No 8

Where candidates homed in on the specifics, their marks were high. A number of incorrectly paired claims were selected, and incomplete claims stated. Candidates need to look for the relevant wording of the claim and to state this correctly, without omission.

## Question No 9

9(a) Generally the claim was correct. Some considerably reduced their marks by giving the claim of the Deputy Mayor for London.

9(a) Many candidates did extremely well in the assessment by:

- assessing Boris Johnson's credibility with reference to his job role or similar explanatory factor such as being resident in London
- referring back to the claim by using one or more of its words such as 'government' or 'European countries', or similar words such as 'plan' or 'airport'.

Others chose perfectly sound credibility criteria, but limited their access to marks by either not explaining why Boris Johnson has an ability to see/a vested interest to tell the truth or to lie, or making a general point about Boris Johnson rather than the claim that he made.

Since 9(a) and 9(b) carry 14/75 of the marks, it is worth candidates investing time noting how to focus answers to the marks that can be credited.

9(b) Many candidates gave very focused answers. They identified at least two criteria, said which was the most important and why, and gave a judgement. To gain the fourth mark, candidates need to explain why the criterion they dismissed as being less important was so.

## Question No 10

There were some outstanding answers for this question, especially when it came to assessing the plausibility of negative or positive economic effects. The strongest answers discussed the environmental negatives in terms of cost, thus relating them to 'economic effects', or they developed the existing reasoning, weighing up the cost of developing a new airport structure as opposed to developing Heathrow. In terms of credibility, candidates were adept at putting the correct sources on each side of the debate and relating the assessment to claims that had been made.

Most candidates attempted a judgement. The strongest related this to benefits, whilst others looked at whether it should or would go ahead which gained no marks.

As this question covered a large proportion of the marks on this paper, it might be worth noting the key points that candidates needed to take on board in order to gain access to the higher levels of marks:

- To be credited with strong credibility, answers needed to identify two parties for each side of the argument. They also needed to state the credibility criterion and support this with an assessment, such as that the Deputy Mayor has a vested interest to keep his reputation with reference to his desire to be re-elected, or something similar.
- To be credited with strong plausibility, they needed to go beyond just quoting from the text. This was a topic where you would expect most AS candidates to be able to talk in terms of jobs created in building the TEA, servicing the TEA and the transport links, handling the extra passengers, whilst also being able to discuss the potential total expense in a time of restraint, the cost of minimising environmental damage, or the potential for reduced traffic at other London airports which could mean job losses.
- An explicit judgement needs to be made. At level 3 this needs to be drawn from both the assessment of credibility and plausibility. In this instance it needed to relate to the likelihood of the benefits

Overall candidates responded well to the range of question formats which do change over time. Candidates need to be advised to read the questions carefully to ensure that they respond to the specifics of each question.

# F502 Assessing and Developing Argument

## General Comments

The handwriting of few candidates presented serious problems. Although markers did not, of course, penalise such candidates for the inconvenience and additional time spent on their scripts, they were not always confident that they had interpreted the candidates' intentions correctly, which may have indirectly reduced the mark awarded, particularly where the mark depended on deciphering one particular word in a response. Around one in twenty candidates could usefully have taken advantage of the provision for word-processing answers, when in practice less than half this proportion actually did so.

Candidates in general found the topic of free buses slightly more accessible than last year's topic (concerning the voting age). However, they didn't always spot places in the resource book or in the questions where the issue concerned free *public transport* in general, rather than just free buses.

The time allowed seems to have been about right for most candidates. Only a very few seemed to have stopped in mid sentence because, presumably, they had run out of time, but on the other hand at least as many, having realised they had argued the wrong way in the final question, had time to cross out their response and develop another further argument from scratch.

The awarding of a mark for being "concise" in the extended response questions (24 & 26) has reduced the number of candidates who have to ask for an extra answer book. Nearly all those who did so had not even used the additional space (pages 14-16) in the main answer book. Candidates should be encouraged to use this space before asking for an extra book. Though of course it does not affect the marks, it does simplify the processes of scanning and marking scripts, as well as saving a few trees.

## Comments on Individual Questions

Qu.	Answer	Comment on performance
1–3	<b>Passwords</b>	
1	<b>B</b>	
2	<b>D</b>	C proved a popular distracter.
3	<b>C</b>	This proved to be the hardest question with only a few getting it right. Far more thought the answer was A and nearly as many chose D. As a result it only really discriminated at the top level.
4–5	<b>Given names</b>	
4	<b>D</b>	This question had the best discrimination, with strong candidates choosing the correct answer, D, and weak candidates going for C or B.
5	<b>A</b>	

<b>6-8</b>	<b>Police diversity</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>C</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>B</b>	C proved a popular distracter.
<b>8</b>	<b>B</b>	This question also discriminated very well.
<b>9-11</b>	<b>Photography</b>	
<b>9</b>	<b>B</b>	This proved to be the second easiest question, with nearly all getting it right, so it only discriminated at the lower end.
<b>10</b>	<b>A</b>	This question also discriminated very well.
<b>11</b>	<b>C</b>	
<b>12</b>	<b>D</b>	
<b>13-15</b>	<b>Prenuptial agreements</b>	
<b>13</b>	<b>D</b>	The second hardest question, with just over a third choosing the correct response. C was the most frequently chosen distracter selected by nearly a third.
<b>14</b>	<b>C</b>	
<b>15</b>	<b>C</b>	This proved to be the easiest question with nearly all getting the right answer, so it really only discriminated at the lower level.

### Question 16

This question gave a good range of marks. Sections (a) and (b) discriminated well at the lower end.

### Question 17

There was a good range of marks, with most getting Q.17(a) correct, and most getting 1 mark on Q.17b (for explaining “counter” with reference to the text, but not explaining “assertion” or for explaining both, but with no reference to the text)

### Question 18

Both two mark answers were frequently seen but weaker candidates missed the point completely. Onemark answers were rare but mainly arose when a candidate correctly got the point about not all availing themselves of their entitlement, but spoilt it by beginning “though (at least) 40% *will* be entitled...”

### Question 19

There was a good spread of marks. It was enough for candidates to say that spending more time in shops leads to people spending more money. Some made it more complicated by saying that the money spent has to be more than some other variable (the cost of making buses free, the bus fare they would have paid, the cost of parking, or the revenue from parking fees or fines).

Such claims were marked on their individual merits. There is a subtle difference between an assumption and an implication. The paragraph implies that currently lots of people visit town centre shops but spend less time than they would have liked in them because they have to rush out to avoid a parking fine. An assumption has to go beyond this and include something that is *unstated*.

Some candidates discussed the economic benefit of parking fines. Since this argument is only about those who *avoid* parking fines, this was not relevant. Others talked about the economic benefit of parking fees. Whilst whoever receives parking fees no doubt derives economic benefit from them, and free buses might well reduce revenue from parking, that is a separate counter argument against free bus travel, but not relevant to the argument in this paragraph. However, the argument as stated does assume that (currently, without free bus travel) people who travel by car do have to use fixed/limited time parking.

### Question 20

Most went for strand B and got 2 marks for saying that the cost of making buses free is likely to be a lot more than the £40m currently lost through fare evasion. The second most common answer was strand D.

### Question 21a

This question discriminated well, with good candidates getting full marks and weaker candidates often opting for “slippery slope”.

### Question 21b

It was quite common for candidates to get 1 or even 2 marks despite getting 21a wrong. Those who got 21a right nearly always went on to pick up 2 marks for the explanation. There is a subtle difference between saying “there are other ways to reduce accidents” and “there are other factors which *cause* stress/accidents”. The former is what was wanted. A few lost marks by writing part of what belonged in part (b) in the space for part (a) or vice versa.

### Question 22

Strand B was common and typically candidates got 2 marks for saying Hasselt is small but London/ the UK is much bigger so they are not comparable. One example of a 3-mark answer went to say that in small towns bus journeys are relatively short, but in large towns (like London) they might take so long that people would still prefer to use the train. Another example of really good development would be to say that though the costs of rolling out the scheme across the whole UK would be much higher, so presumably would be any benefits.

### Question 23

The most common answer which gained credit was to say that in the hypothetical reasoning “If people were offered a choice.... it is obvious they would choose the bus”, the condition is not sufficient to ensure the consequence, because while free buses are a factor in discouraging people from using their car, it is not the only one; convenience (luggage/ frequency of services/ proximity of bus routes) also influence people’s choice. Candidate answers rarely achieved the sophistication needed for 3 marks, but 2-mark answers were common.

The most common answer which gained no credit was to refer to the survey and question the credibility of the evidence (“we don’t know the size or composition of the sample”). This type of answer is more akin to what is being tested in Unit 1, but is still frequently seen in Unit 2.

**Question 24**

The question does not specify a particular context. Most candidates considered parents and children, or students and teachers. A few considered criminal justice and the prison system and a few even considered the training of dogs. All these contexts are valid.

Candidates were not expected to have specialist knowledge about the psychology of rewards and punishments, though a number were able to use the term “positive reinforcement”. Many still feel the need to invent spurious statistics or authorities, but others effectively supported their arguments with their general knowledge that rates of re-offending amongst ex-prisoners remain high.

The requirement that they must write a counter *argument* and not merely a counter-assertion in order to be strong proved an easier-to-judge and effective criterion for “strong” than distinctions based on the precise relevance of the response.

A small point in this Q and Q.26 is that candidates often introduce intermediate conclusions and consequences with the indicator words “meaning that”. Usually they are not actually clarifying the meaning of anything, and the indicator word “therefore” would make the structure clearer. This would not significantly affect the marks unless perhaps the structure was right on the borderline between “strong” and “weak”.

**Question 25a**

Thinking of a good point is only half the battle in this question; the more difficult task is to express it using the exact structure asked for – this is an exercise in being clear and concise, rather like the construction of Japanese haiku. Candidates were far more likely to say too much (and get 2 marks) than too little (and get 1 mark). Some candidates showed little sympathy for the principles of a welfare state, and suggested that if people haven’t contributed taxes they shouldn’t be entitled to benefits.

**Question 25b**

“...it should be free for all” ; some took this to mean “if everything was free...” and completed the Hypothetical Reason with statements like “....businesses wouldn’t make any money”.

**Question 26**

The question asked for a challenge, so in effect candidates were required to argue that “public transport should *not* be free for all”. A significant minority were capped at 3/12 for arguing the wrong way. Others got less than full credit for mainly emphasising why it *should* be free for *some*. The Mark Scheme page 29 says “candidates who merely give an argument against free buses will be unlikely to gain strong for reasons”. This is important, because some of the reasons (cost, overcrowding) could apply to buses or to public transport in general, so candidates who specified buses rather shot themselves in the foot. Other reasons (bus lanes or traffic in general becoming congested) can only apply to buses. (One can envisage congestion on the rail or tube network but no candidates considered this). Even if they didn’t specify buses, most students seemed to have buses in mind, and very few seriously considered the impact of free train travel (e.g what would happen to first class?? - an issue raised by one candidate). No one at all contemplated free scheduled air flights!

In general it is safer if a candidate’s reasons don’t all revolve around the same issue. Some responses were just a discussion of who should and who should not be entitled to free public transport.

In this Q (and Q.23) some candidates have accepted that free buses means less traffic and less congestion and less greenhouse gas emissions, while others have argued the other way and said that free buses would mean more demand, more buses and more traffic and emissions. Both arguments are possible though the former is more plausible. Very few candidates identified the assumptions behind these conclusions: the former assumes that a significant proportion of bus passengers would have made the journey by car if buses had not been free: the latter assumes that most of the extra bus passengers are people who would otherwise have used other means (train, cycling, walking) or would have stayed at home and not made the journey at all (and that there aren't currently many vacant seats on buses).

Some candidates thought that if public transport were free, the government would lose the profits they are currently getting. The reality is that most public transport is not owned by the government (apart from the East Coast Rail Co) nor in many cases does it make a profit, but relies on subsidies. However, there is a valid point to be made about cost to the government, namely that subsidies would have to be much larger (or else, as some pointed out, the system would be starved of cash with lack of investment and low wages).

Another example of weak reasoning was the suggestion that public transport should not be free for all because some people don't use it. As it stands, not charging someone for something they have no intention of using is neither good nor bad – it makes no difference to either the person or the transport company. However, this was developed into a more valid reason by candidates who went on to point out that free public transport would plausibly lead to higher taxes, which would leave those who don't use it worse off. A number in effect commented that "There is no such thing as a free bus!" as it has to be paid for by someone.

There proved to be big contrasts, and some slippery slopes, in what students thought the drawbacks of free public transport might prove to be. Some thought it would be a waste because people would continue to use their cars as before; others predicted serious job losses in the petrol and car industries. Some thought there would be a massive subsidy paid for by high taxes, with far more buses and trains to meet the demand, all of which would need to be paid for, others that there would be little or no money and bus and train companies would cut services, wages, investment and maintenance and eventually go bankrupt.

Similarly there were contrasts in the principles which underpinned parts of the discussion. Some approved of the principle popularised by Marx "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need". Others took the more right wing view that "taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for services that don't benefit them personally".

# F503 Ethical Reasoning & Decision-making

## General Comments

The handwriting of a few candidates presented serious problems. Although markers did not, of course, penalise such candidates for the inconvenience and additional time spent on their scripts, they were not always confident that they had interpreted the candidates' intentions correctly, which may have indirectly reduced the mark awarded.

Candidates were expected to find this topic a little more accessible than some, because they are likely to have discussed both crime and punishment in general and this particular issue in preparation for this exam and/or earlier in their education. However, not many candidates showed evidence of such prior knowledge.

Candidates were, of course, not penalised because of any lack of knowledge about the legal system, but it did lead them to make some strange claims and arguments. For example, the most frequent argument against a mandatory death sentence for murder was that it would apply to people who killed by accident or in self-defence. Similarly, some candidates suggested that in order to avoid wrongful convictions, capital punishment should apply only to people whose guilt was considered to be "beyond reasonable doubt".

Some candidates seemed to work by "box-ticking". They knew what they needed to do in order to gain marks, and therefore did it, but without much understanding or judgment. Some candidates identified two sides of every point in Q 3, even if they could not think of anything significant to say on the other side. Similarly, because they knew that in Q 4 there are marks for evaluating sources, they put in an evaluative comment every time they referred to a resource document, but the comments often missed the point. The validity of the opinion poll reported in Doc 5, for example, relies on the size of the sample and the integrity of the polling organization, rather than the self-proclaimed political neutrality of the Metro newspaper.

In order to help candidates understand what kind of choices they should discuss in Qs 3 and 4, some guidance was given in a prefatory note to Q 3. Many candidates ignored this guidance, however, and discussed simpler choices, such as "introduce capital punishment" versus "do not introduce capital punishment."

Many candidates quoted Gandhi's observation, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind," in their answers to Q 3 or 4, but in most cases it was unclear what they thought it meant and how it contributed to their argument.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Question 1

Many, but by no means all, candidates achieved at least 4 out of 6 on this question. There were seven acceptable answers, of which candidates were required to identify two. The best answers explained the salient features of the weaknesses in reasoning, and were awarded 3 marks out of 3. Answers which correctly identified the weakness but offered incomplete explanations were awarded 2 marks. Answers of marginal significance received 1 mark: these included a causal flaw in paragraph 2 and the anecdotal nature of the evidence. The same mark was given to candidates who recognized that paragraph 3 of the document included a slippery slope and a restriction of options but were unable to separate them from one another. A few candidates discussed the credibility of the source, but this was not credited, because it is not a weakness in

the reasoning. Other answers which received 0 marks consisted of counter-arguments or were based on misreading the document.

### Question 2

Most candidates performed well on this question, and a significant number produced subtle, perceptive and well-argued answers. The marks for Q 2 are divided into a and b, but the two marks should be taken as a whole, which is how they were awarded. By far the majority of candidates noted that the number of homicides rose following the abolition of capital punishment, and most of them explained that this was not necessarily a relationship of cause and effect. Many candidates were so concerned to avoid a “causal flaw” that they omitted to acknowledge that there probably was at least a partial causal relationship between these two facts. A fair number of candidates recognized that even if the relationship was causal, the increase in cases of homicide might be irreversible.

### Question 3

Nearly all candidates followed the suggestion offered in the question paper and used Justice as one of their criteria, but many of them conflated this criterion with others, such as public opinion or deterrence, instead of concentrating on justice itself. Many candidates focused on the feelings of victims and their families rather than thinking of justice as something objective. The possibility of unjust convictions featured prominently in many answers, a few of which did not even mention that some convictions are just, but this point was not credited unless there was some reference to the specific problems of capital punishment in this regard. Some answers implied that no form of punishment is ever justified by the criterion of justice because of the risk of unjust convictions.

Another popular criterion was public opinion. Discussions of this criterion were very varied. Some were entirely speculative, and others based on some knowledge of political opinion. Many candidates rightly made use of the resource documents in order to make a judgment on this criterion, but some of these over-stated the small majority reported by Harris Interactive in Document 5 as being in favour of capital punishment, some even claiming that 94% of the respondents favour capital punishment for murder, which was based on a misreading. Quite a lot of candidates judged that 1100 respondents was too small a sample to be significant, which seems rather harsh. Many candidates rightly observed that the evidence provided in the resource documents in relation to public opinion was inconsistent and therefore inconclusive, but some did not notice this.

Cost was an appropriate and popular criterion. Most candidates judged that capital punishment would be cheaper than life imprisonment, but some claimed the opposite. Evidence from the US was used to claim that repeated appeals against a death sentence would be very expensive and delay executions for many years, but that point relied on too many significant assumptions to be credited.

Effectiveness and public safety were two more popular and pertinent criteria. Candidates who used both of these tended to lose marks by repeating themselves.

Ease of implementation was used by quite a lot of candidates, but they varied considerably in what they meant by it. Some referred to the chances of getting legislation through Parliament, and others the difficulty in recruiting executioners and persuading judges to implement the law. It was not obvious what a good answer would say in relation to this criterion.

Not many candidates used “international standing” or the equivalent as a criterion, but the comments of those who did so tended to be perceptive and significant.

A few candidates did not understand what they were being asked to do, and either discussed the issue instead of a specific choice or argued in support of a choice without reference to criteria.

#### Question 4

Nearly all candidates took the right approach to this question, using inferential reasoning and dividing their answers into self-contained paragraphs, many of which ended with summative intermediate conclusions. Inevitably, candidates varied in how successfully they accomplished this task, but almost everyone understood what the task was. There were some cases of very impressive inferential reasoning.

Most candidates argued in favour of not re-introducing capital punishment. The second most popular choice, and the most popular alternative, was to reintroduce it, without specifying for what offences or whether it should be mandatory or discretionary. Because candidates did not have time to think through the implications of their choices, some made inappropriate suggestions, such as that death sentences should be imposed only on people who pleaded guilty. Some alternatives – such as that capital punishment should be introduced for all crimes – were too easily rejected to be worth discussing.

As in previous sessions, the best way to achieve Level 4 for the use of principles was to discuss a few principles in some depth rather than many principles superficially.

As shown in the indicative content on the mark scheme, various free-standing principles were especially relevant to this issue; but few candidates deployed them. Nearly all used the familiar major ethical theories. A few did not use principles at all, which severely reduced the marks available to them for this question.

Most of the candidates who made use of either or both of the versions of Kant's Categorical Imperative used them to oppose capital punishment. In some ways, these are more persuasive applications of the principles than Kant's own, and were accepted as valid, since the specification does not require candidates to know Kant's own opinions or reasoning on this subject. Those candidates whose reasoning resembled Kant's own were, of course, also credited. Candidates found it quite difficult to apply the Principle of Universality, some claiming that if capital punishment were introduced at all it would have to be applied to every crime, including trivial misdemeanours, and others that if you execute one person you would have to execute the whole human race (this last is not as eccentric as it appears, since it resembles, and may have been based on, Kant's argument against suicide). Few candidates if any had the confidence to criticise the Principle on this basis. As on previous occasions, nearly everyone who cited Kant's principle that persons should be treated as ends, and not as means only, omitted the last word: although this did not prevent them from applying the principle accurately, the word "only" is an important part of Kant's theory and should not be overlooked.

Most of the candidates who appealed to the Golden Rule, including those who quoted it correctly, interpreted it as supporting capital punishment for murderers, either because they misunderstood the Rule as saying that people should be treated in the way they treated others or because they believed murderers had implicitly shown by their actions that they wanted to be killed.

Many candidates opposed the reintroduction of capital punishment on the grounds that it would breach the right to life. The main reason for rejecting the counter-argument that anyone who has committed murder has thereby forfeited this right was that human rights are universal and cannot be forfeited. Very few candidates explained why some rights, such as the rights to freedom, autonomy and family life, can legitimately be withdrawn from criminals as a punishment, but the right to life cannot. The slogan "Two wrongs don't make a right" was

sometimes cited in opposition to capital punishment, but few candidates if any tried to justify that principle, and few if any explored its implications for other forms of punishment.

Some candidates referred to Divine Command ethics, or to the teaching of various religions or holy books, but few of them did so accurately. In particular, many candidates knew that one of the Jewish and Christian Ten Commandments forbids murder, but nearly all of them took it for granted that this prohibition applied to the state as well as to individuals, whereas in fact the Jewish Scriptures/Christian Old Testament prescribe death as the punishment not only for murder but also for many other crimes. Candidates are, of course, not required to know about the content of Divine Command ethics, but they are free to refer to it if they wish, and if they do so, what they say should be correct.

Some discussions of the Utilitarian approach to this issue identified the competing factors well, but many candidates conflated this theory with public opinion. Persuasive discussions of the issue from this perspective included: the happiness of victims (in non-lethal cases) and their friends and families; the distress of convicts and their friends and families; the happiness caused by increased public safety; and public opinion. Utilitarianism does not allow for differentiating between innocent and guilty parties, unless it affects the amount of pleasure or pain. Very few candidates considered any dimension in the Hedonic Calculus except extent.

Some candidates attempted to apply the principles of Liberty (“Harm”) and Paternalism to this issue, but they were not really appropriate, since few people, if any, dispute that it is the role of the state to punish criminals. Similarly, altruism, egoism and elitism had very little to offer on this issue.

Nearly all candidates made at least some use of the resource documents in their arguments, and most included evaluative comments, although many of those comments were superficial or ill-judged. Some candidates took documents at face value despite having correctly identified serious flaws or gaps in the reasoning when answering question 1 or 2.

The most frequent and most serious flaw in reasoning was begging the question. Although a few candidates argued in favour of such claims as that the right to life is inalienable, that judicial killing qualifies as murder or that the laws against killing apply to the State as much as to individuals, far more asserted or assumed those claims without support, thereby begging the question.

# F504 Critical Reasoning

## General Comments:

The subject matter and questions in this paper seemed to engage most candidates.

A reduced entry appeared to lessen the number of weak candidates but there also appeared to be fewer than normal top-grade candidates: certainly there seemed to be fewer L4 and/or top L4 marks given than in other years.

Bad handwriting was, as ever, a challenge for Examiners marking online. It undoubtedly affects a candidate's marks, presumably for the worse.

## Comments on Individual Questions:

### Question 1

Most candidates answered this question reasonably well by noting that Documents 1 and 2 did not necessarily support the conclusion although Document 3 did lend some support to it.

However, some candidates found the jump from F501/2 in regard to evaluating sources difficult. Some candidates did not read the sources (Documents 1, 2 and 3) closely enough: close reading of texts should be made paramount by all Centres. For example, in Document 2, it states that 70% of diamonds mined are used in industry, but quite a few candidates did not take this point in, and declared that banning the sale of diamond jewellery would devastate the diamond industry. Furthermore, many candidates did not seem to realise that Doc 3 referred only to African nations and only to diamonds, not gold.

Technically speaking, some candidates, when asked to make an overall judgement about several sources, make a judgement on each source separately, which is fine, but if they do not pull the several judgements together to give an overall one, it means they miss the highest marks as they have not fully addressed the question. Again, reading the text of the question closely, and answering it to the letter, is vital if candidates are to gain the highest marks.

Comments about Document 1 were often dismissive or missing: they usually referred to the fact that there was no mention of human rights in the advertising text. Few candidates seem to gather the importance of the fact that a growing fashion of flashy jewellery for men is bound to increase demand and thus the questionable means of supply of gold and diamonds.

Document 2 also produced similar remarks about a lack of mention of human rights abuses but candidates seemed to be able to go further and note that there were unlikely to be HR abuses in the USA, although as stated above there were some who did not go through the data closely enough to "mine" the information usefully. However, stronger candidates who gained Level 4 marks had taken note of the statistics and did use them well; for example, by stating that a ban would not prove very significant in the circumstances. Some candidates seemed to think that losing a job was a HR abuse. It may well be, but not in comparison with blood-diamond mining practices in Africa.

Most candidates saw that Document 3 did give support to the idea of a ban but only the better candidates argued that it was not wholly supportive, with suggestions of driving the industry underground possibly leading to more HR abuses.

Question 2.

This question was less challenging than Q1 and most candidates scored at Level 3 or above.

Where some candidates lost marks was in failing to explain the detail of the structure of the passage. Far more candidates than otherwise said it was **not** an argument, which was correct, so it seems that this most vital part of the Critical Thinking syllabus has been fully comprehended by Centres and candidates.

Many candidates recognised the hypothetical question in the first sentence and the counter assertion at the end, which got them up to Level 4 if the judgement was correct, or gained them some credit even if the judgement was incorrect. Therefore almost no candidates scored below Level 2.

But those who recognised that it was not an argument but gave almost no other detail could not achieve Level 4. The best candidates recognised an implied conclusion along the lines that we should pay more attention to the source of things and thereby gained top marks.

Question 3.

There are still some candidates who do not recognise an analysis question despite it almost always coming as Q3 and being marked clearly as Analysis. It may be that there are some candidates who have not been taught analytical skills or at least given confidence in their ability to tackle analytical questions. As this is the easiest question on which to score marks, candidates who do not answer it even moderately correctly are throwing marks away. Centres should be encouraged to spend time on developing analytical skills in their students.

Despite this being an easier than usual Analysis question, fewer candidates than normal scored at Level 4. Conversely, very few candidates scored below bottom Level 2. Most candidates therefore appear to have grasped the basic analytical skills but there are fewer who can show more sophisticated recognition of argument elements.

Most candidates could recognise the main conclusion and at least one other element and show/relate supporting links so they could access bottom level 3 marks for this question. However, candidates getting top level 4 were few and far between.

It should be noted that a diagram/map of the structure of argument is much clearer and quicker to produce than writing down textual description of argument elements and their relationship to each other. Therefore, Centres should be encouraged to teach diagrammatic analysis/mapping of structure and links of argument: it will teach the basic skills of critical thinking and give candidates a technique by which they can quickly and forensically take an argument apart (their own and/or other people's) which would be invaluable in many careers eg law/politics/journalism/academia etc

In particular, some candidates seemed confused about the significance of the counter assertion and a very small minority mistook the counter assertion for the main conclusion or some other reasoning element. However, level 4 marks were largely unattained as few candidates recognised that “reducing consumption....into poverty” was the intermediate conclusion and fewer still noted the two separate strands of reasoning as shown in the diagram attached to the M/S.

Quite a few candidates identified the Main Conclusion as an Intermediate Conclusion, which was incorrect and dropped them to Level 2 unless noted as an IC of the whole argument. The mark scheme allowed for a level 3 mark for this and some candidates did get it.

Unfortunately, some good candidates lost marks as they did not identify exactly which text was denoted by which argument element: ie they left it to the Examiner to determine which phrases fitted each identified element. Also candidates who do not use a diagram to show the structure of the argument often forget to state which element/s support/s other elements.... i.e. they say things like “the reason then follows the counter assertion and an intermediate conclusion then follows that reason”. Candidates must be precise in stating how elements hang together: Critical Thinking involves an analysis of conceptual architecture and requires the same kind of attention to relationships of words within texts as architects show towards spatial relationships and dimensions.

#### Question 4

##### General Comments on Longer Questions

Questions 4 and 5 are the questions which ultimately determine candidates' final grades. Candidates need to leave sufficient time to score well, if possible, on these questions.

However, length is not necessarily the key to a high mark: both questions look for quality of argument, encompassing as much critical thought as possible, rather than mere quantity of words.

Coherent argument is the core value in these essay-style questions. Candidates should be encouraged by Centres to develop coherence in their argument: to work on thinking ideas through and writing them down as strands of thought, with reasons leading to believable intermediate conclusions; then challenging these strands of thought with proper counter argument, also written down as a coherent strand of thought leading to a sensible intermediate conclusion. In this way, the candidate is more likely to come to a rational judgement based on an actual argument with her/himself. This method is also more likely to produce spontaneity and /or originality, which will result in high Level 4 marks.

##### Specific Comments re Question 4

This question tested whether candidates can decide if the claims made in one text are responded to well or poorly in two other texts. The strongest candidates summed up the claims made in the first text Document 4 and then went through the responses to those claims one by one in the other two texts in Document 5.

Candidates need to ensure that they make an explicit summative statement in answering essay questions i.e. that they explicitly come to a judgement in regard to the question. Many candidates who might have reached a level 4 or high level 3, having made relevant evaluative points throughout, are penalised because they have not demonstrably answered the question as they have not reached a recognisable overall judgement. In regard to Q4, a summative comment like “Document 5 is only partly effective in responding to the claims in Document 4” at the beginning or end of the answer would enable a candidate to access higher marks. Of course, credit is given to specific points raised but without a summative statement, a candidate is unlikely to progress beyond Level 2.

As is often the case with this question, candidates are asked to evaluate the response of one set of documents against the claims made in another. It is important therefore for candidates to decide what are the claims made in Document 4 before going on to evaluate the responses in the 2 letters of Document 5. As stated earlier, candidates who began by listing the claims made in Document 4 generally achieved higher marks than those who omitted this vital first step.

Unfortunately, very few candidates spotted that Document 5 was not in fact a response to Document 4 itself but to a TV programme of which Document 4 was merely a preview. This inevitably meant that the responses in Document 5 were slightly tangential to the contents of Document 4, a point which very few candidates picked up.

Some candidates focussed mainly on credibility criteria, ignoring the claims and responses of the various writers, while an almost equal number of candidates ignored credibility criteria altogether and appeared over-willing to proclaim effective texts which were patently biased. A balance of the two critical thinking elements /skills will generally achieve the higher levels.

Question 5

There seemed to be a fairly even split between those who supported and those who challenged the proposal. Stronger candidates put forward more cogent arguments which led to the conclusion that we should not restrict the use of rare resources only to essential purposes but qualified it by suggesting some limits. Despite the prompts in Documents 4 and 5, few candidates considered recycling of rare resources as a useful possibility.

Although most candidates appear to have been taught to define key terms as part of their argument, only a few managed to use their definitions to successfully inform their argument. Often the definition of rare resources was too narrow eg either fossil fuels or the gold and diamonds mentioned in the sources. In general, candidates seemed to misunderstand the meaning of the word “rare”. In some cases, candidates appeared to discuss the proposal as if the word rare had been omitted which meant their essays did not fully address the question and thus they could not achieve the higher levels. Some candidates took refuge in the idea that the key terms were beyond clear definition. However, if this case was argued well, an answer could achieve a high level.

A distinct minority of candidates relied heavily on ethical principles. This did not necessarily bar them from achieving the highest levels but these answers must be presented with well-developed reasoning to achieve top Level 4.

Overall, this question proved to be difficult for many candidates, although it probably was no more difficult than earlier years. It is undoubtedly the trickiest question on the paper. Some candidates used a catalogue of examples, some of which were very apt, but on occasion they were treated as if they constituted reasoning on their own. Perhaps the contentiousness of the subject itself (which many candidates boiled down to “saving the planet”) overtook critical thinking skills in some cases.

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**1 Hills Road**  
**Cambridge**  
**CB1 2EU**

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