



Thursday 4 June 2015 – Morning

AS GCE CRITICAL THINKING

F502/01/RB Assessing and Developing Argument
F502/02/RB

RESOURCE BOOKLET

To be issued with the Question Paper

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Use the Resource Booklet to answer all the questions in Section B and Section C.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- The information contained in this Resource Booklet was accurate when it went to press, but may subsequently have changed. Questions should be answered on the basis that the information is correct.
- This document consists of **2** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

INSTRUCTION TO EXAMS OFFICER/INVIGILATOR

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Stage Not Age

- In the UK, children are normally placed in year groups determined by the age they will reach by the end of the summer holidays.
- Progression from one school year to the next is normally based on age and not on their stage of academic achievement.

The most important focus of education must be progress and achievement. Anything that does not support this focus can be ignored. Just as schools no longer discriminate based on a student's ethnicity, disability or gender, they should no longer discriminate based on age. Students in schools should be grouped only by ability and not by age. 1

Of the ten schools in England and Wales which Ofsted inspectors have rated as most outstanding, eight grouped students in mixed age groups for pastoral time, such as registrations and Life Skills. These schools have shown that there are social benefits to mixed age groups. Their students reported that they had more friends of different ages and there was a reduction in bullying. 2

Both the general public and students want grouping by ability. In a survey in 2012 of 1715 adults which was published in *The Sunday Times*, a massive 67% supported the introduction of a system requiring children to repeat a year if they did not make enough academic progress. Only 21% opposed this idea. 3

Grouping by ability, instead of age, helps to give a better learning experience. When students are put into classes based on their age, you end up with mixed-ability classes. In these classes, the teacher has to juggle with providing many different tasks for students of different abilities. The teacher will inevitably fail and this demotivates the students. Nobody should believe that they are a failure. 4

It appears that schools and car insurers are the final places where it is acceptable to discriminate based on age. But even this may change soon. In 2011, the European Court of Justice told insurers that it went against equality laws to charge men more for car insurance than women. If car insurers can no longer discriminate on gender grounds, it is only a matter of time before they will not be allowed to discriminate on age grounds either. If practically all parts of society do not and cannot judge people based on age, then neither should schools. 5

The views of those who want to stick with the current system of grouping students by age can be dismissed because they rely on extreme negative examples of bright but lonely 16-year-olds having to go to university and less able students being forced to repeat year after year. It is much better to have these situations than treating everyone who was born in the same academic year as if they were the same. Otherwise, it will be as ridiculous as asking farmers to harvest all of their strawberries on the same day, because some would be unripe and some starting to rot. 6



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