OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCE

General Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 H479**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H079**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE General Studies (H479)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE General Studies (H079)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

F731 The Cultural and Social Domains

General Comments:

The examination was received well by candidates who wrote some interesting, informed and mature answers to a wide variety of questions. Candidates should be congratulated for the level of engagement and fluency shown in their answers which, in many cases, revealed keen thinking and analytical skills as well as an awareness and understanding of some important contemporary issues.

The short and extended answers of sections A and C were generally answered well but there is the need to consider the amount of detail required in order to gain the maximum number of marks. Candidates should be encouraged to be aware of the marks for each question as this suggests the depth of response that is required. Judging the length and the amount of detail that is given in an answer is also an essential feature of effective time management . The number of marks allocated to the question is the simplest guide to these requirements; a number of candidates continue to ignore these basic examination techniques. In addition, the amount of space in the answer booklet allowed for writing gives an indication of the length of answer that is expected and consequently the amount of detail. Questions 1c and 5c clearly required a more extended answer. Short, unsupported statements or even bullet points would not secure a mark in the upper mark levels.

In essay construction candidates are encouraged to compose their answer within a secure framework that would include an introduction (stating an outline of the case or offering some definitions), the development of arguments in the main body of writing, and ending with a conclusion consisting of a preference or a viewpoint. Whilst Examiners want to credit the candidate's level of engagement with the topic there is also the question of posing challenges to the premise and promoting some discussion and argument that might lead to a conclusion. A strong opening to an essay would involve the candidate inviting the Examiner into the discussion by suggesting where the essay is leading. To simply launch into a topic with assertive and unfounded views based on little evidence creates an uneasy initial relationship between writer and reader.

The quality of written communication was generally quite good this year, possibly due to the more formal, structured layout of the answer booklet. However, many candidates did not use the additional pages at the back of the booklet effectively and instead chose to write outside the lines given or even vertically up the side of the page. This approach made the process of assessment more challenging for Examiners.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question 1a

Examiners saw a good range of answers that outlined key points about the changes in design of the domestic kitchen. It was important to remember that the question was about *design* and not comparing the *content* of the two images provided. The most common observations were concerned with changes in technology, the cost of materials, the relative cost and the availability (and invention) of appliances. More discerning responses highlighted the changing role of the family – notably that of females - and the way that kitchens have become a social space in contemporary homes.

Question 1b

The question involved choosing one of the options: a children's play area or an elderly persons' recreation area; it was disappointing to note a number of candidates choosing to offer suggestions for both. The most popular factors that were chosen were safety (such as soft landing areas, no sharp edges, and security fencing) and enjoyment (such as stimulating games, bright, vibrant colours, and interactive experiences). The question was a good example of candidates being asked for two key factors which indicated a maximum of four marks for each factor. Many candidates failed to achieve full marks due to a lack of development of ideas and an absence of examples.

Question 1c

Candidates were offered the opportunity for creative thinking and reasoning in producing an outline for a commercial to launch a new theme park. As this was the launch the impact of the commercial on the audience was important. In addition to the outline, the question asked for reasons for the format and content that had been chosen. These two elements needed to be included in order to reach the high mark levels. The most popular themes that were explored included whole family involvement, suspense, and excitement. Some imaginative answers suggested new rides and experiences that other parks did not offer (though the actual experience sometimes remained a mystery.) Examiners were impressed by the knowledge shown by some candidates who discussed the use of camera shots and angles, music, sound effects, and voice overs (sometimes suggesting the name of a celebrity that would be used to add value to the commercial.) The answers with the highest marks always included plausible, practical reasons for the approach that was being taken.

Section B

Question 2

Most of the arguments provided for the decline in religious belief due to the absence of facts were based on scientific discoveries such as Evolution and the Big Bang theory. These major themes were pitted against religious writings and Holy Books. Having stated these points, many essays lost momentum although some candidates revived their thesis by including reference to the perceived lack of a god's presence in times of human suffering and tragedy; several contemporary examples were given. Of the counter evidence some candidates challenged whether faith needed to be based on hard evidence and commented on the fact that religious faith is growing in some parts of the world. Balance was provided either by stating that supreme beings had not been disproved and that they rely on faith, and that not all science was reliable. Other points contributing to the decline included changing, busy lifestyles and the influence of the media. Examiners found the most interesting answers to be those where candidates used personal views and experience to support their case.

Question 3

This proved to be the least popular question answered by a few candidates. However, there were some good explorations of the nature of humour in art including reference to irony, sarcasm, even slapstick. Popular music seemed to be a common choice as candidates attempted to explore the subtlety of lyrics to convey humour about an event or a life experience. The use of humour in the stage performance of music (through costume, effects, and stage presentation) was an interesting and completely valid approach. There were also examples of political humour as well as the way artists use caricature in their work.

Question 4

The media remains a popular area for candidates and this question was no exception. The key requirement that examiners were looking for was some exploration of *trust* and *truth*. The inclusion of examples was essential in order to reach the high mark levels. Many answers did reveal some of the strengths of the press as well as its weaknesses although an essay could be seriously hampered if its content consisted of a comparison between different sources of news rather than the quality of its content. Candidates clearly recognised the power of the press to make an impact on the public and many showed a good awareness of the phone hacking scandal. The behaviour and lifestyle of celebrities, and the way this is reported, provided the basis for many essays. There was sometimes a failure to acknowledge the bravery and sacrifice made by journalists to seek the truth by reporting from war zones, for example the BBC's broadcasts from Afghanistan where UK military forces played a major role. Less convincing essays revolved around the style of gossip reporting adopted in relation to such things as soccer transfers and the behaviour of celebrities. The General Election was also a popular topic although there was no real discrimination between the qualities of reporting displayed by different newspapers thereby attempting to discern some level of truth in the news content.

Section C

Question 5a

The question asked for two conclusions that could be drawn from Source C. There was no specific requirement for candidates to choose one single piece of information. Therefore a conclusion could involve the consideration of several items that lead to a view being formed. The numbers involved in the source proved to be a distractor with some candidates simply stating that '51% of people think that the economy is the most important thing facing the country today.' This is clearly not a conclusion but a statement based on the source. The importance of the economy needed to be related or linked to an issue (like austerity, unemployment, increasing fuel costs) in order to gain credit. The linking together of issues – for example, the economy had an effect on unemployment and the demise of the NHS – always produced a strong answer.

Question 5b

Most candidates were able to select and develop answers relating to important and unimportant issues but these were not always related to the area in which they lived. Examiners were flexible in their awarding of credit by considering regions of the UK or even the global notion of East and West. When candidates drew upon their local knowledge some of the answers were heartfelt and compelling particular when examples of closing businesses, the pressure on local Accident and Emergency departments, and the plight of the jobless were highlighted.

Question 5c

As there has been a recent General Election this question attracted some interesting and lively views. However, one issue that arose is that some candidates based their answer on the system of voting (first past the post versus proportional representation) rather than the problem of voter turnout and how compulsory voting might affect this. The source provided several hooks for candidates to hang their answer on with reference to 'political legitimacy', 'stronger mandate', and 'civic duty.' These phrases were not always fully understood or used to good effect. Common answers, which led to good marks being awarded, included the lessened likelihood to complain if everyone is involved in the process and the possible rise in public interest in politics. These positives were set against the negative views of the infringement of freedom of choice, and random voting.

OCR Report to Centres – June 2015

Section D

Question 6

The emergency services are a subject area that can be found in the specification. It was disappointing to find so few candidates attempting this question which invited them to examine a way in which the scope and quality of the chosen service could be improved. Sadly the few examples observed failed to go further than 'there should be more of' or 'more money should be spent on'. On occasion, examiners read suggestions such as improved levels of fitness for police and fire officers, more acute medical training for ambulance personnel, and a wider coverage and deployment of the air ambulance services to assist in the care of those who live in more remote areas.

Question 7

The question proved popular and accessible to most candidates. A common sense approach was adopted in many answers since there is a virtual template which can be used in examining the social, financial, and environmental impact of a major undertaking such as HS2. Reference to the breaking down of the north-south divide, the impact on businesses, and the effect on the financial climate were all valid points. These were usually balanced with mention of the relative cost of HS2 compared to the growing needs of the NHS and the effect on the recovering economy. The serious environmental problems that may be faced by rural communities in areas where the train line will pass through was a valid and interesting observation. Whilst examples of advantages and disadvantages were well sourced the weakness of many essays lay in the inability of candidates to justify and explain their choice. A basic list of points on both sides would only attract a mark in the middle mark level.

Question 8

By asking candidates to consider the extent to which they agree with the quotation Examiners were expecting to see a balanced case that would end with a reasoned conclusion that stated a preference or personal choice. Many candidates acknowledged the influence of their background on their lifestyle, development, and choices. Some acceded to the notion that there was no escape from this no matter how much one might like to break free. For example, if you lived in a 'rough' area if was difficult to shrug this off – in reality this is not always the case and a very good answer would demonstrate this by showing how, through the process of socialisation, education and personal experience, people can change their lives. On the other hand, examiners admired and rewarded the sense of pride shown by some candidates who celebrated their background and upbringing in stating that it has made them who they are today. Patterns of voting, attitudes to homosexuality and racism were areas frequently referred to as being those influenced by family and friends. Neighbourhoods and social classes were also seen as major influences although examples of people who had escaped their backgrounds were given with the conclusion that you can grow up with both good and bad influences and still be your 'own' person in the end.

F733 Domain Exploration – Applying Synoptic Skills

General Comments:

Candidates engaged well with this paper which was felt to be appropriately pitched to their various ability levels. The preponderance of completed scripts suggested that candidates had found timing the paper straightforward. There were very few spoiled papers and very little offensive material.

Colleagues felt that Section A tested a good range of skills using material which had interested the candidates. In question 4, candidates' personal knowledge of Reality television often informed their answers – though not always helpfully in terms of quality.

Section B offered all the candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to select and deploy knowledge, marshal arguments and evaluate their quality. Candidates' presentation of answers caused the usual problems. Many of them are now unused to hand-writing at length, and there were some genuinely indecipherable scripts. Very few essays showed any sign of having been planned – again, the word processor makes editing easy. Many answers were an acrostic of crossings-out and marginal- or foot-notes which needed to be sorted out before it could be marked. This cost Examiners time they could ill afford

More troublesome was the number of additional pages which again took a long time to work through. The space allotted for answers indicates the length to which candidates should write, and this fact needs to be emphasised. Concise, focused and succinct prose is what is needed, particularly in Section A, and Centres would benefit their candidates by giving them practice in producing such writing. Candidates' disregard for suitable answer-lengths was especially noticeable in the word-processed atypical scripts, where there are, of course, no space constraints of any kind.[1]

Many ignored the Board's instruction that word-processed answers should be double spaced. Single spaced answers are impossible to annotate intelligibly.

Candidates' spelling, grammar and construction were felt to be generally secure, although the decline of punctuation continues apace. The majority of candidates used only full stops and commas. For many candidates the use of the possessive apostrophe has become a haphazard business. Similarly, usages like "these sort of problems" now seem to be accepted as correct. Few now seem to know the difference between words like *flaunt* and *flout, discrete* and *discreet, infer* and *imply, fewer* and *less.*

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1 was felt by colleagues to have worked well, and on the whole candidates found it straightforward and scored effectively on it. Very few candidates scored fewer than five marks here: a majority scored seven or eight. The differentiator here was what candidates offered as development. In the case of the demolition engineer, colleagues looked for references to safe demolition, the securing of damaged infrastructure and the provision of secure bases for redevelopment. The doctor was intended to offer an easy "one off the mark". It needed to be developed with reference to public health aspects such as sanitation and clean water, prevention

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[1] It has become noticeable that a small number of Centres regularly submit the bulk of their entries in atypical form. This should be discouraged except in cases of genuine need. This also means that candidates can over-write word lengths. .

of epidemics provision of effective nutrition. Many candidates showed an effective grasp of the role of the accountant, referring knowledgably to budget control, the allocation of disaster relief funds and liaison with the civil powers over redevelopment.

Question No. 2 was also seen as an accessible opportunity to use synoptic thinking skills. In the scientific domain most referred to animals in scientific testing procedures. They developed points about use of human subjects and the dangers of this. Socially, most candidates cited the discontinued use of animals in sport, entertainment and tourism and the keeping of pets. Development most often referred to the loss of recreation and entertainment, and the effect on employment and the economy. In the cultural domain the emphasis was on the shift from a meat-based diet to veganism, with developments referencing the traditional cuisine of the UK, the need for greater knowledge of vegetable protein sources[2], and effect on the agricultural and catering industries.

Question No. 3 proved to be a very effective discriminator. Many candidates seemed unable to discern the falsity of the assumptions partly because they needed to be teased out [at least in part] from the sub-text of the three statements. As it was, relatively few candidates saw and were able to explain the nature of the assumptions and why they were false. These are detailed in the mark scheme, but it was the rare candidate who based an answer on them. Many candidates scored minimally with two marks, or offered simple observations which raised their game to four or five.

It is worth making a general point about questions 1, 2, and 3 which Centres may find helpful. The mark scheme awards 8 marks for content, which can be split 3 + 3 + 2 to attain full marks. A typical question of this kind will ask for three content points with development. Each content point will have at least two possible development points attached to it. Candidates who practise such questions by looking for the three content points, developing one of them briefly for a total of 2 marks, and the other two more extensively for 3 marks, stand a good chance of full marks. This point of examination technique deserves to be better known. Too many candidates simply stated three content points baldly, or developed all of them at length, in effect scoring 12 marks out of 8 – wasted effort on the candidate's part, and unwelcome additional reading for the Examiner.

Question No. 4 was similarly a good discriminator. The source itself was chosen because it was over-written and hyperbolic in its attack on Reality television, and most candidates commented on this, even if few did so cogently. The comparison with laughing at lunatics in Bedlam came in for a lot of justified criticism, as did the comparison with public executions. That said, many candidates found it hard to marshal effective arguments against some of the statements in the source, often resorting to rebuttals based on irrelevance or, in the weakest answers, simple gainsaying. There were sound, logical and reasonable grounds on which counter-arguments could be based [the mark scheme lists fourteen of them] but far too many candidates resorted to vague and irrelevant riposte. Comments about such things being a matter of opinion, or assertions that because Reality TV programmes are produced to a high technical standard they could not possibly be vulgar or shoddy, cut little ice. The weakest candidates often resorted to statements like "if you don't like Reality TV then don't watch it". Most candidates evidenced at least one point in the source which could be called unreasonable exaggeration. Many pointed out the slippery slope leading from regulation to censorship. Better candidates produced effective rebuttals by referencing Reality TV shows which are genuinely educational [*24 hours in A&E, One born every minute*], have some sociological value [*Benefits Street*] or

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[2] It was interesting to note that many candidates seemed not to know that protein could be sourced from anywhere but from meat. Only one candidate in my cohort mentioned pulses. Rather alarmingly, quite a few candidates said that if the eating of meat were to be prohibited under animal rights legislation, then the population would have to rely on the protein in eggs and cheese. Where they thought eggs and cheese come from was not made clear.

offer wholesome if trivial entertainment [*Strictly Come Dancing, The Great British Bake Off, Masterche*f].

Few candidates thought their ideas through. Many said that if participants in these shows did not feel humiliated, cruelly used, or exploited then so far as they were concerned this was not happening. Few, though, pointed out that such participants were often not sufficiently self-aware to realise the extent of their humiliation, abuse or exploitation. Similarly, much was made of the fact that participants were all volunteers, and understood what they were signing up for – as though the fact of their volunteering to make fools of themselves somehow made them look less foolish.

Many candidates found the concept of pseudo-celebrity difficult. A celebrity is by definition someone who is famous *only* for being famous: a pseudo-celebrity is famous only for being visible. Few candidates made this distinction, and also confused celebrity with fame. This latter arises, at least initially, from a genuine achievement in some field of endeavour.

That said, although genuine high level four answers were rare, so were genuine low level one answers. This question offered candidates across the whole cohort a chance to attain a mark commensurate with their ability.

Question 5 proved to be the second most popular question in Section B. Popular music, in various genres, proved to be many candidates' first resort as an art form. Many of them wrote knowledgeably and with insight on the social, political and ethical messages to be found in many sorts of popular music. Able candidates made distinctions of some finesse between musicians who had genuine political or social agenda, and those who saw political or social attitudinising as a marketing tool. Most who used popular music as an art form did so ably. Their evident engagement with the topic added immediacy and relish to their work.

The choice of a second art form proved to be problematic for many and it was here that the question began to discriminate with some delicacy. Many candidates cited film and/or television, the theatre and the visual arts. Here the strength of the answers became a function of the quantity and quality of the references the candidates could cite. A wide range of art forms was credited including stand-up comedy, street art, and documentary screen work – these latter depending on the quality of the candidate's commentary.

The best answers were from those who, as well as offering fully exemplified commentary on two art forms, also challenged the source by asking why the arts could not also be used purely for entertainment. As one candidate put it "anyone who finds sociological comment in a Tom and Jerry cartoon wouldn't even understand the point he is missing".

Question 6 was the least popular question, but attracted a relatively strong entry. The format of the question allowed for a variety of approaches, and candidates took full advantage of this, whilst always acknowledging the centrality of the source. Many candidates stuck closely to the source, evaluating the extent to which religion survives, how much this survival could be attributed to its ability to answer Jonathan Sacks' questions, and how much to other causes. Others posited a variety of answers, some based on their knowledge of various world religions, and contrasted these with answers derived from scientific, social and cultural sources. Others took a sociological approach, and compared the social and cultural outcomes of religion's answers to these questions with the way people actually live in today's society. Answers of this kind were often striking in their boldness and variety of reference, including one candidate who referenced Arthur Hugh Clough's *New Decalogue* to point up those contrasts.

Less able candidates may have chosen this question *faute de mieux* and wrote answers seemingly aimed at finding out what the question actually meant. Such answers were often discursive to the point of vagueness, but there were relatively few of these, and no answers at all in level one. It was refreshing that the reflective nature of the question was mirrored in the

approach taken by many. There were very few answers which attacked religion in the ill-natured and ill-informed fashion which such questions have sometimes attracted in the past.

Question 7 was the most popular question by a considerable margin, and accordingly attracted the widest range of attainment amongst the answers.

Most answers lay in mid -level three [25 to 30 marks] by virtue of a careful reading of the source, the identification of an adequate range of the various kinds of issues it raised, and the offering of straightforward evaluative comment on these. These middle range candidates fitted the question's requirements very well. It was, essentially, a multi-layering problem solving exercise which offered them a chance to do themselves justice in a comfortable format.

Weaker candidates saw only the more obvious aspects, but often did so in a workmanlike and methodical fashion that did enough to see them into lower level three [20 – 25 marks]. Candidates were usually placed in level two or lower because their answers were unbalanced. The [rare] level one candidates wrote only about Paul Tate or Clare Pye, for example.

Better candidates not only solved the problem elegantly and economically but also enriched their answers in various ways. This often took the form of examining the grey areas of the case study, such as the conflict between professional ethics and personal morality. Better answers contrasted Paul Tate's courage with his lack of consideration for his family and for Dr Pye. After all, he must have known that his actions would land her in deep professional trouble. One very good answer included speculation as to the reasons for the two day gap between his farewell phone calls and his suicide. Was he simply getting up the nerve to kill himself? Or was he hoping against hope that someone would stop him?

These subtleties apart, really good answers were ornamented with AO3. References included the euthanasia/assisted suicide laws in Holland and various of the United States, institutions like *Dignitas* and Lord Falconer's Assisted Suicide bill now before the House of Lords.

Although, as stated earlier, this question was essentially a multi-faceted problem solving exercise, it was encouraging to note that very few candidates managed to keep it completely at arms' length. Some genuinely touching answers often added personal asides or conclusions in which they stated their own views. To the extent that these observations were rooted in the question, it was a pleasure to credit them.

In summary this paper, and candidates' approach to it, offered once more proof of the fact that General Studies offers a wide ability range a worthwhile educational experience, not least in the crucial fields of clear critical thinking, thoughtful analysis, the manipulation of ideas, and the lucid expression of the results in clear and succinct prose.

F734 Culture, Science and Society: Making Connections

General Comments:

It was pleasing to note that, as in previous years, the vast majority of candidates were well - prepared for essay writing and there were some very good responses presented. In general Examiners felt that answers were focussed and thoughtful containing a good range of ideas and appropriate discussion and development.

Each question has two parts: the first enables candidates to demonstrate knowledge and to use experience to construct a response which refers to the three domains; the second considers the extent of an issue by looking at a range of possibilities and possible arguments. It was disappointing to note that a number of weaker candidates continue to copy or paraphrase material directly from the source thus limiting their opportunity to access the higher mark levels. The sources are offered as a springboard for the construction of answers not as the primary component to be used in an essay. Too often the second part of the question was either ignored or was relegated to a series of simplistic and unqualified assertions. In order to access the higher levels it is important for candidates to give attention to all parts of the question equally.

It was pleasing to note that time management was good and that candidates divided their time equally between both questions. Examiners came across few spoiled responses containing information that bore no relevance to the questions.

This year has seen an increase in the use of abbreviations, and the assumption that Examiners will understand their meaning. While the examination is not testing the technicalities of the English Language, candidates should be reminded that in public documents, such as an examination script, formal English presentation should be adopted.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

The question contained two sources, one which showed a selection of newspaper headlines, and the other included a selection of information about the ways in which protesters have raised awareness of issues in the past. Candidates were asked to review the nature of 21st century public protest and its methods and motivations and then to consider to what extent non-violent methods of protest could still be effective. A good range of responses emerged which offered good differentiation between candidates.

A pleasing number of candidates were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the issues relating to the methods and motivations for protest. Higher marks were awarded for the incorporation of ideas from each source using this as a way of introduction to other relevant, and sometimes personal, examples of protest. Weaker responses were very general in content and tended to work through the source without offering any additional relevant examples. In addition there were often vague references to violent or non-violent protest; examples were needed in order to make a point and develop an argument successfully.

The number and quality of examples effectively differentiated between candidates. The more able candidates offered a wide range of additional support whether this was local, national or global. Many of these were contemporary such as those relating to the General Election whereas others included boycotts of the recent Winter Olympics. Some candidates used

examples which were not from the 21st century. When used well these often provided a good illustration about the method of motivation and its durability. On other occasions they were used as a replacement for a modern-day example.

Some candidates approached the question logically, discussing each of the domains and the issues concerning violent and non-violent protest followed by a discussion about the relative merits of each approach. Weaker candidates omitted the cultural domain.

The source material was generally used well and the prompts within the question offered some comment on the nature of protest. The matter of *extent* was usually addressed but often only in the form of the awareness raised and publicity rather than in terms of any change being effected. Some also considered public perception and sympathy for a cause.

Reference to the Cultural Domain focused on religious motivations for protest and often included examples such as ISIS, the persecution of religious faiths, and even some reference to the Northern Ireland 'troubles' as a contrast. Rights for oppressed groups including Afro-Americans and the struggle for equality (whether this be of racial, gender or suffrage) were often cited. The role of the media was often explored, and sometimes to good effect when considering the effectiveness of protest formats.

Discussion in the Scientific Domain tended to concern the petition to 'save the bees'. The more able candidates were able to offer examples ranging from GM crops, fracking, abortion, animal testing and rights, and protests about nuclear disarmament. Reference was also made to the role of the internet and social media and the ability to co-ordinate protests, or create them using this method. Change.org, Anonymous, and 'Friends of the Earth, were just a few of the organisations cited.

In the Social Domain there was coverage of political and economic protest such as that relating to Mark Duggan or tuition fees. Often candidates became confused when discussing these. Likewise there was confusion about the Hong Kong protest where a significant number of candidates believed that the protesters had turned to violence as their original, peaceful protest had failed.

The major contrast between essays lay in the ability to discern the motivation for protest. Most were able to offer a range of examples of methods (boycotts, marches, strikes, and bombings for example.). The discussion about motivation for protest often centred on political, religious and environmental issues.

Where the extent of the effectiveness of protests was considered candidates were able to recognise that some aspects might be more successful than others. Good answers compared and contrasted violent and non-violent methods and motivations and made value judgements about their effectiveness in the short and long term.

Question 2

This question asked candidates to read the source and then discuss the impact of changing weather patterns in relation to the domains. They were then required to consider to what extent these changes were natural or due to human activity. The discussion of impact allowed for the consideration of a vast range of material. The discussion about extent presented more challenge.

Examiners were surprised by the number of candidates who included discussions about tsunami, tectonic plates and earthquakes which are not weather related. In addition there were a significant number of cases where the question was misread resulting in a response which discussed global warming and climate change in relation the domains.

Candidates responded to the question in many different ways. Some worked through each domain and then discussed the extent to which the effects caused climate change. Others began with the issue of extent and then moved to discuss the impacts of changing weather patterns. The weaker responses tended to mix the information which led to muddled, vague and irrelevant material included in the answer.

Weaker essays were descriptive and focussed on the science of climate change. It was here that there was often confusion between natural and human activity. More able candidates were able to offer additional examples and consider issues on a local, national and global stage. In addition these responses regularly offered a balance to the consideration of extent.

Many struggled to discuss the impact that changing weather patterns have in the Cultural Domain. Here weaker candidates often focussed on 'God's Plan' or the change in lifestyle after one's possessions are lost as the result of an extreme weather event. More able candidates were able to offer a contrast of the impact of changing weather patterns in relation to different countries, the UK and Pakistan being two common examples. This presented the opportunity to explore links between the Social Domain in terms of economy and lifestyle and the Scientific Domain in relation to the need for GM crops or technology to warn of weather changes. More able candidates considered the impact of changing weather on important cultural and historic sites. Examples of these included Stonehenge, and Prague.

The discussion in the Scientific Domain often related to different types of technology available to measure the changes in weather and to come up with explanations. Other suggestions included the need to reconsider how buildings would need to be constructed in the future or the need for development of GM crops in order to ensure a food supply in changed weather and climate conditions. Some candidates also discussed the effects of changing weather in relation to the spread and transmission of disease. This included such examples as the spread of malaria and other insect-borne diseases.

The Social Domain included discussions about the costs of recovery from the events or in terms of action plans to prevent such disasters re-occurring. Often there was reference to the relative costs of these preparations and those of other services such as the NHS or education. Weaker responses tended to talk in absolutes such as the population starving to death, drowning in floods, animals dying because they were stranded. More able candidates were able to offer a discussion about the contrasting impacts for First World and developing countries.

When considering the extent to which the changes were due to natural or human activity a number of candidates were able to explain the natural changes in the earth's weather systems throughout time. Here there was the opportunity to demonstrate an awareness of how the concept of global warming would affect the life cycle of the Earth. The more able candidates were able to offer a balanced and reasoned account before reaching a conclusion.
It was perfectly acceptable for candidates to determine that the changes were natural and influenced my human activity, or vice versa.

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