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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned**.

THINKING SKILLS

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8436/01
Multiple Choice

Question Number	Key	Question Number	Key
1	C	26	E
2	A	27	B
3	C	28	D
4	B	29	C
5	D	30	D
6	B	31	B
7	D	32	C
8	D	33	B
9	D	34	A
10	C	35	B
11	E	36	E
12	C	37	C
13	A	38	E
14	B	39	D
15	B	40	A
16	A	41	B
17	A	42	C
18	C	43	B
19	D	44	C
20	D	45	C
21	E	46	C
22	C	47	D
23	C	48	A
24	B	49	B
25	D	50	C

> **Paper 8436/02**
> **Paper 2**

General comments

The spread of scores displayed that the paper was discriminating effectively. The best candidates appeared to have no difficulty completing answers to all three questions, and very few candidates failed to attempt all three questions. This suggests that for most candidates, lack of time was not a big factor in the level of performance.

Performance varied between Centres. Candidates from some Centres appeared to be very well aware as to what constitutes a good answer to a critical thinking question, whereas those from a few Centres were less clear about what the question was asking them to do. The Examiners look for careful analysis and evaluation, leading to a considered judgement. Answers do not have to be long in order to earn marks; a short succinct answer can be more effective than a long and elaborate one, particularly where a question has only one or two marks available. Sometimes answers were long because they simply repeated the material found in the stimulus passage, without offering any evaluation of it. Little or no credit can be given for such repetition, because it provides no evidence of skill in reasoning.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates came to a conclusion either that Lamont's claim for compensation should be accepted or that it should be rejected. Better candidates qualified this conclusion with phrases such as 'on the balance of probability' or 'giving the benefit of the doubt'. Weaker candidates offered no conclusion at all.

Most candidates were able to point out that there was no solid evidence that Lamont sustained serious injuries which required time off work and caused financial losses, and that he had a vested interest in making his claims against the hotel. A few pointed out that his claim that he fell in the bath was consistent with the known facts from the photograph, and that the hotel spokesperson's statement revealed that the hotel may have been cutting costs at the expense of safety.

This question in particular revealed a difference between Centres. Candidates from many Centres were clear that they had to assess the reliability of various claims and statements by commenting on such things as:

- vested interest, for example, in relation to the law firm JKL (and its regular consultant doctor), who would receive no fee if they did not win the case

- prejudiced judgement, in relation to the doorman, because he did not receive a tip

- partiality, in relation to hotel employees

- consistency with known facts, for example, the plausibility of Lamont's claim that he slipped, given the evidence from the photograph

- hearsay, in relation to the secretary's report of the business associate's comments.

However, candidates from some Centres appeared to be unaware that this was required, so lost marks.

This question was also the one on which candidates were most likely to waste time and effort simply repeating what had been said in the passage, describing the alleged incident, and quoting the comments of various persons. In some cases, candidates would write two pages in this way, for which no marks could be awarded, because there was no reasoning or evaluation of evidence involved.

The most common error in candidates' reasoning (though not very widespread) was to assume that the willingness of the hotel to go back to supplying bars of soap despite the expense showed that they had *not* been seeking to cut costs, instead of the opposite.

Question 2

Most candidates performed better on this question than on **Questions 1** and **3**.

1   Most candidates correctly identified the two sides of the dilemma, i.e. the desire amongst the public for access to the caves, and the damage that allowing access would cause to the paintings.

2   Most candidates had no trouble in identifying the correct sentence in answer to part **(a)**, i.e. the first sentence in the final paragraph, and most scored full marks in part **(b)** by identifying three of the six main reasons.

3   This was mostly answered correctly, i.e. that the *author* claims that the top priority is to open the sites to the public, but a significant minority gave the archaeologists' version of the top priority, i.e. to protect discoveries from possible damage.

4   This question differentiated well, since most candidates could recognise the point the author wanted to make, that if something is always kept for the future, no-one ever gets the benefit of it. Better candidates went on to say that the analogy was effective in the sense that it underlined the absurdity in this; and the best candidates also pointed out ways in which the two things being compared differed significantly, e.g. that a football pitch, once damaged, can be renewed, but if the paintings were damaged they could never be recovered as original paintings.

5   This also differentiated well, in that the best answers would say, that if the comment could be seen as weakening the argument in one sense (by providing evidence that it was particularly important to preserve these special paintings) and as strengthening it in another sense (by showing that the public would benefit all the more from seeing these most beautiful and creative paintings), it in fact neither weakened nor strengthened it. Candidates could get some credit for presenting one or other of these points, and more credit for presenting both, without going on to say that the two cancelled each other out, which was what the best candidates did.

6   This was the most difficult part of the question, but there were some good answers, which not only mentioned possible advantages of keeping the caves closed, but also developed their points well. For example, some said that the archaeologists had a special responsibility as professionals to preserve the paintings and to learn from them about the lives of those who painted them; that if the caves were kept closed whilst they did research, methods of protecting the paintings from damage could possibly be developed, to everyone's advantage; that, contrary to claims in the passage, the painters of these paintings may have wanted their work to last through time, rather than be seen by everyone.

Question 3

For this question candidates needed to:

- analyse the argument in the passage, i.e. pick out the conclusion, say which statements are the reasons, identify any unstated assumptions, and show how these fit together

- evaluate the argument by considering the truth or acceptability of reasons and assumptions, and assess whether they support the main conclusion

- give further arguments for or against the conclusion.

This is a tough assignment, and only a few candidates achieved very high marks. Some candidates may have had insufficient time to do their best on this question, particularly if they had written at unnecessarily great length on **Question 1**.

Analysis

The main conclusion is that the suggestion that the minimum age for driving should be raised to 18 is not sensible. There are five main strands of reasoning:

1   An *intermediate conclusion* that raising the minimum age would have only a temporary effect, because (*reasons*) the young drivers who are unsafe are those willing to take risks and flout the rules plus having to wait a year would not change their personalities.

2   It would be unfair to the majority of young people (a *reason* or an *intermediate conclusion*).

3   An *intermediate conclusion* that if you want to reduce accidents by means of age limits, the minimum age should be raised to 50, because (*reason*) those aged over 50 have the fewest accidents.

4   A better way to reduce accidents might be to reduce speed limits (*reason*).

5   The best authorities on the safety of young drivers are driving instructors (*reason*), and they advise against raising the limit, but recommend a legal requirement for more intensive tuition (*reason*).

The first paragraph is introductory.

Most candidates recognised that the argument was aiming at a conclusion that the age limit should not be raised, but some quoted the last sentence as the conclusion, which is clearly not the main conclusion, since it is a report of what driving instructors say. The first strand in the reasoning was generally correctly identified, and many answers focused also on the fifth strand. Some explicitly said that the first paragraph was introductory, and others indicated their recognition of this fact by simply excluding it from their analysis. To reach the highest level for analysis, candidates need to identify the main conclusion, intermediate conclusions, and/or techniques (in this passage that the point about 50-year-olds is meant to show the absurdity of raising age limits in order to reduce accidents). Marks are given at an intermediate level for recognising the main conclusion and most of the main strands of reasoning, and at a lower level for recognising the general drift of the argument. Answers that simply repeat or summarise the passage get little credit.

Evaluation

Some candidates were able to identify some strengths of the argument:

•   that provided the claims about those young drivers who cause problems are true, this section of the reasoning gives strong support to a conclusion that raising the minimum age for driving would not solve the perceived problem

•   that the point about 50-year-olds gives a striking illustration of the absurdity of trying to solve the problem by making people wait until they are deemed very safe before allowing them to drive

•   that it is sensible to suggest lowering speed limits and more training for young drivers.

Many answers correctly identified various problems with the argument, e.g.:

•   no evidence is given to support the claim that the young drivers who are unsafe are those with particular personalities that do not change in a year

•   if this were true, why is the accident rate higher amongst 17-year-olds than amongst 18-year-olds?

•   although it may be unfair to the majority to raise age limits, it may nevertheless be justified if it greatly reduced serious traffic accidents

•   the point about 50-year-olds may not undermine the opposition's case, because that case is presumably not that the minimum age should be one which excludes all but the group with a very low accident rate, but rather one which excludes a group with an exceptionally high accident rate. In relation to this point, some candidates offered an alternative explanation of the low figures for those aged over 50 – that fewer of them drive, or that they drive less often. In principle, this is a good point to make, but the passage does not make clear exactly what it is comparing. It may be accident rates for distances driven in the different age groups; it may be percentages within each age group of those who cause accidents, rather than absolute numbers of accidents. A few very good answers made this point about ambiguity

- the suggestion that reducing speed limits would be effective is at odds with what the argument claims about the personalities of those who are unsafe. If they flout the rules, then they are likely to exceed speed limits

- the reliability of the comments of driving instructors can be questioned, because they might benefit from giving advice that more tuition is needed

- the last paragraph draws attention to the relevant question of experience, which is ignored by the passage, but could have been used to give stronger support to the conclusion. If 17-year-olds have a higher accident rate than 18-year-olds due to their relative lack of experience, then raising the minimum age would indeed be likely to have only a temporary effect.

Some candidates were able to make most of these points, and the majority could make at least three of them. Some answers relied on making general points referring to ways in which arguments may be weak or flawed, without relating these to the particular argument (e.g. 'no statistics are given', 'a general conclusion is drawn from one example', 'this is a lop-sided argument', 'this is a one-sided argument', 'the author uses a flawed analogy', 'the author used vague or emotive terms'). Such statements, by themselves, can be given little or no credit. These general categories *can* help people to spot what is wrong with arguments, but the consequence of relying solely on them in an examination answer is that Examiners cannot judge whether the candidate really understands the problems with the argument in question. Candidates should be encouraged to try to say what is wrong with an argument without using this technical or semi-technical language.

Further argument

Some candidates did not explicitly indicate which part of their answer is meant to be further argument. Although this does not necessarily prevent them getting marks for further argument, it is easier to award the marks if the Examiner does not have to judge where evaluation blurs into further argument (or vice versa). Many candidates were able to offer good examples of further argument, and to say explicitly whether these were for or against the conclusion.

Examples in favour of not raising the minimum age:

- younger people have quicker reactions

- if 17-year-olds are given responsibility, they will behave responsibly

- new drivers may be more accident prone than experienced drivers, at whatever age they start to drive.

Examples in favour of raising the minimum age:

- it may be sensible to raise it to 18 as one measure amongst others, allowing drivers more time to gain experience whilst still under supervision

- young people behave more responsibly at age 18 than at age 17

- in most countries 18 is the age at which people are legally regarded as fully adult, and the criteria for being allowed to drive should be the same as those for being allowed to vote

- 17-year-olds should be free of responsibility for others' welfare.

Often candidates' further arguments were not closely tied to the argument in the passage, but related to more general reasons aimed at safety consciousness and/or prevention of accidents. Such answers are given some credit, but not full marks for further argument.