GCSE

OCR Report to Centres

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Humanities (J445)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

B031 Cross-curricular Themes

General Comments:

In general terms the questions seemed at the appropriate level for most candidates. The questions based on the key concepts, section (a) in questions 1 to 4, were not well done this year. Many candidates made no response indicating they had no understanding of the concept/s. These concepts are clearly listed in the specification content. The extraction questions, section (b) in questions 1 to 4, were answered well by candidates of all abilities, with the exception of Religious and Moral Issues.

The response to the essay questions, section (c) in questions 1 to 4, was good. There was a clear divide in the level of the responses. All candidates used the bullet points to some extent to structure their essays and many achieved respectable marks by producing answers which did not develop beyond this. Some candidates were able to develop the points with their own knowledge and this led to them accessing the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Candidates should be advised that achievement of the highest marks depends on developing answers clearly showing personal knowledge that has been appropriately used.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Issues of Citizenship

1(a)(i) Most candidates identified a link with voting; ballot was often used interchangeably with ballot box. General answers made comments appropriate to elections.

1(a)(ii) This question was not well answered with only a small number of candidates having any real knowledge of Proportional representation. A common mistake was to suggest it related to representation in a court of law.

1(b) Most candidates were successful in extracting the issue of the cost of Aids drugs in Africa and child labour. A common error was to state cheap labour rather than child labour.

1(c) Most candidates attempted to use the scaffolding in the question to structure their answer. The success in doing this largely depended on the depth of their knowledge. Well answered responses showed clear understanding of current issues and clear advantages and disadvantages were identified. Parliament and voter turnout were generally well developed. Some candidates confused referenda with elections and/or opinion polls. Others were not clear that a referendum involves a yes or no answer and assumed that it was a process of giving opinions in general to government.

Issues of Economic Wellbeing and Financial Capability

2(a)(i) Many candidates knew that negotiation involved two parties coming to an agreement in which both sides made concessions. The most frequent examples were negotiating prices.

2(a)(ii) Few candidates attempted to state facts about arbitration. Those who did knew that it was for dispute resolution by the use of a neutral third party whose decision was binding. There were very few successful responses.

2(b) Most candidates extracted well but a number identified the correct answers in the wrong question.

2(c) The majority of candidates answered this question and made valid points about credit cards and personal loans. Good candidates tackled all four points with confidence and factual knowledge. Weaker candidates tended to confuse bank loans with loan sharks, borrowing from family and friends and wonga.com. A large proportion of candidates did not realise that store cards are different from loyalty cards and many did not understand hire purchase, confusing it with hiring a car.

Environmental Issues

3(a)(i) Many candidates answered this question and knew that items can be reused and gave examples. A common error was to list several examples. Candidates are only rewarded for one example in these questions. Helping the environment was a popular response. A number of candidates stated it was a legal requirement and wrote about council collections.

3(a)(ii) This question was not always well answered. It appeared that many candidates were uncertain of the actual meaning. When answered well, candidates often gave examples of what people do to increase or decrease their environmental footprint.

3(b) This question was answered quite well although a number of candidates answered with one positive and one negative temperature. Candidates often gave background reasons for the establishment of the World Climate Programme rather than the two events that raised concern.

3(c) Candidates were able to explain how MEDCs had 'caused' climate change, knew they needed to change and gave examples. They were also aware of the reluctance to change lifestyles. Development in LEDCs and the associated issues produced answers with less rigour.

Religious and Moral Issues

4(a)(i) The majority of candidates identified natural disaster and gave examples.

4(a)(ii) The majority of candidates identified the human element of moral evil and gave examples, good candidates referred to free will.

4(b) The first part of this question was not answered well. Only a small minority of candidates extracted the organisations. Many candidates wrote accurately about Muslim, Jewish and Christian attitudes about how they might participate but this did not answer the question. Religions' not allowing divorce was well answered.

4(c) Candidates should study two religions and the question required a response which compared and contrasted two named religions. The most common failing was the breadth that candidates tried to use which of necessity meant the detail was limited. When candidates identified clearly their two religions studied they gave very good answers and were able to show similarities as well as differences.

Issues of Health and Welfare

5(a)(i) - 5(iv) Most candidates scored well on these questions.

5(b) A major problem for many candidates with this question is the way the marks are allocated between the Assessment Objectives. Many candidates wrote reasonable narrative answers but did not utilise the information from the documents on the paper to support their answers. The mark scheme does recognise implicit use of the sources but rewards candidates who clearly cite from the documents at appropriate points in their answer more highly. In terms of the narrative there was a strong underlying theme that the employer was mainly responsible, but most candidates considered that non-compliance by workers exonerated the employer.

B032 Application of Knowledge

General Comments:

In general terms the questions were at the appropriate level for most candidates. The paper differentiated quite well as a full range of answers was seen. There was scope for all candidates to show what they know, understand and can do.

The extraction questions 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 were generally successfully attempted by a large number of candidates. The skills based questions 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 12 had a more mixed response. There was evidence that candidates were not utilising the research skills that each section demands. Each section is clearly identified, both in the specification and on the paper, with the types of skills which are required. Despite this, many answers were narrative rather than analytical in approach. There was a continued improvement in the responses to questions 6 (a) and (b). Candidates in general wrote better than last year, linking their answers more closely to the specific type of research identified in the question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Analyse and Interpret Different Types of Evidence

1 Most candidates identified the correct figure of £513 million. A few candidates did not gain the mark because they wrote the figure inaccurately e.g. £513 billion or simply £513.

2 Most candidates identified the correct percentage 79%. Some candidates mistook the question asked and answered with 81% the total who voted in support. Others omitted the percentage and wrote the number 9271.

3 Most candidates identified either a large number of votes were returned or that Unite hoped to negotiate with BA. Most did not reach full marks as they did not link the two issues to produce a developed answer.

4 Many candidates were able to make a developed statement. Very few candidates reached the top of the levels as they did not discuss the nature of the sources to support the validity of the information.

5 Many candidates wrote and explained a one sided argument. Too many did not understand that their own knowledge required in the question was not about strikes but about research methods. Many candidates had a limited view of the implication of strikes for employees stating that workers lose their jobs/get paid when on strike.

Section B

Using Different Types and Forms of Evidence

6(a) Candidates were able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative data at a simplistic level. Some wrote vague answers lacking explanation eg it is reliable, cheap, time consuming. Assessing the validity and reliability of quantitative methods posed greater difficulties.

6(b) Many candidates approached this question in a simplistic manner. Candidates generally were able to identify what personal documents' were but found it more difficult to assess the limitation of this type of document. Some misunderstood the reference to personal and answers assumed the document belonged to the researcher.

Section C

Assess the Reliability and Utility of Evidence and Reach Reasoned Conclusions

7 Most candidates extracted correctly. Some gave their own definition of the term which was often incorrect and also missed the point that the question requires them to state directly from the source.

8 Most candidates extracted correctly.

9 Most candidates achieved the full 2 marks.

10 At the lower levels most candidates were able to identify correct individual facts and made developed statements relating to male priests. Very few candidates managed to grasp the impact on women and their failure to join the church.

11 This question was answered better this year than in previous years. Weaker candidates tended to focus on the role of women rather than considering the document. Nonetheless many achieved a Level 2 response. The need to use more data for comparison is still not a common feature in candidates' answers.

12 Weaker candidates had difficulty in staying focussed on the question asked – the treatment of women within religion – they dealt with the treatment of women in general which limited them to Level 1 or Level 2 responses. Many candidates used the documents to support their argument very well. One weakness with responses, which is improving but still handicaps too many candidates, is the one sided response which either agrees or disagrees but does not look at a balanced argument. Very few candidates identified the need to consider their own knowledge of research methods. Those that did demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the research methodologies and sampling methods of each source.

B033 Humanities Independent Enquiry: Controlled Assessment

General Comments:

This year's entry showed candidates engaging with some challenging topics, and many of the submissions contained evidence of perceptive consideration of these. There was an increased familiarity with social science research models, and the skills required to complete this unit.

AO2c: Reach reasoned conclusions based on a range of evidence
It is important that candidates ensure their conclusions are firmly rooted in their research; they must be drawn from what they have found out and support them with specific evidence. General linkages to "research, "articles" and "data", are insufficient for marks at the higher levels. Techniques such as direct quotation and reference to data are good examples of how this can be achieved. Conclusions which consist mainly of what the candidate thinks/believes will not gain many marks.

AO3a: Apply appropriate research methodology
It is important for candidates to explain their chosen methodology in detail, and to give reasons for their choices. This should be explicit. There are restrictions on time allowed and word count, and candidates must ensure that their methodology is what they consider to be the most effective, whilst remaining realistic and feasible. Primary and secondary sources/research should be included. Work which relies on secondary evidence only will not meet the assessment criteria for the higher levels for this AO, and will impact on achievement for AO2c as well since the conclusions will effectively be a summary of other people's opinions rather than what the candidate has concluded.
A number of candidates had presented this in a table, which is an acceptable and economic way to evidence this AO. It should also be noted that this should be very detailed in order to achieve the higher marks.

AO3b: Locate, select and organise material relevant to the enquiry
There was some evidence of candidates using a limited range of sources, with heavy reliance on the internet. In some cases, candidates had used different types of sources, such as data/statistics, but there was significant use made of newspaper articles. In enquiries where there was little primary research conducted, the use of limited secondary sources had a profound impact on what the candidate could achieve.

AO3c: Record and present findings in a coherent and purposeful form
Many candidates had chosen to word process their work, and many were attractively and neatly presented, with a clear organisational structure and clearly tabulated data. There was also evidence of a lack of attention to presentational features in some cases.
The highest achieving candidates had undertaken significant analysis of their findings (rather than description or summary), and collated these with their secondary source materials in a meaningful and clearly logical manner. Some candidates had used acknowledged referencing mechanisms (such as Harvard or Oxford referencing) with well constructed bibliographies. While there is no explicit requirement to do this, it does enhance the quality of organisation in the finished work.

AO3d: Evaluate the research methodology employed in the enquiry
A number of candidates had presented this in table form, which resulted in some limited evaluation overall. In many cases, sources had been evaluated for bias. To a certain extent, achievement in this AO relies on what was produced for AO3a; if candidates do not describe and explain their research methodologies fully, their evaluations are likely to be limited as well. To gain the highest marks, the candidate should evaluate the complete methodology, with suggestions of reasonable and viable alternative methodologies, rather than statements of what they could/would/should do if they were to do this again.

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