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

Paper 8436/02

Paper 2

General comments

Performance was extremely varied, with candidates scoring marks ranging from below 20% to over 80%. Some of the questions proved quite difficult across the board. However, as a whole, the paper discriminated effectively, and the best candidates were able to demonstrate a full range of critical thinking skills, producing evidence of reasoning at a very high standard.

Performance, as usual, varied between Centres, with evidence that teaching and preparation made a significant difference to attainment level. It was apparent that many candidates had been well prepared in this respect. The examples of thinking that Examiners look for are those associated with careful analysis and evaluation, leading to considered judgement. Those candidates who worked on the questions in a casual, unsystematic fashion ran the risk of losing marks that were there for the taking.

As in previous years, too many candidates spent undue time and energy on paraphrasing stimulus material. For instance, in **Question 1** there was a tendency to write an account of the incident and to reiterate what the witnesses said, for which there is little or no credit, as it is neither evaluation of evidence nor a reasoned case. Answers do not need to be long: all they need to do is to answer the specific question in sufficient depth to demonstrate understanding. 'Keep to the point' is advice which cannot be repeated too often. Over-lengthy responses not only earn no extra marks, they reduce the time candidates have for the other questions. An imbalance in time-management was evident in a considerable number of scripts, some with three or four sides on **Question 1** and half a side of hurried writing for **Question 3**. Two shorter answers would in those cases have yielded a better score. Moreover, including excessive reiteration or paraphrase in an essay can have the effect of obscuring the genuine critical points which the candidate may be trying to make.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates correctly concluded that there was insufficient evidence for a verdict of guilty on any of the suspects, but that the gardener was clearly the one with most counts against him. He had the opportunity and his testimony was contested by other witnesses, some of whom could be classed as reliable and capable, and whose statements were corroborated by other evidence.

The strongest and most reliable evidence was that of the teacher Whalid, whose apparently impartial and first-hand account challenged the gardener's on two key points: his not having entered the building and his not owning a phone. In the circumstances both these points suggest that the gardener had something to hide. Though less definite, and from a more questionable source, the students' claim to have seen a man in overalls in the corridor adds weight to Whalid's evidence. The grass cuttings found near the scene, however, cannot be used as reliable further evidence, since they could have been brought in by anyone. By no means all candidates evaluated this piece of evidence correctly, but instead placed too much store by it.

Jumping to conclusions, speculating, and inventing interesting but unsupported narratives caused some candidates to lose potential marks. Collusion between the secretary and the gardener, for instance, was the conclusion drawn by several candidates. This is not an impossibility; but there is no evidence in the text to suggest that it is any more than that.

Another weakness in many of the responses was a misuse (and over-use) of the concept of 'vested interest'. It is incorrect to say that '*X has a vested interest*' when what is meant is that '*X may have a motive for lying*'. Having a vested interest means having something to gain from a particular outcome, and hence, perhaps, for saying one thing rather than another. For example, if a witness stood to get the secretary's job, if she were dismissed for dishonesty, that person could be said to have a vested interest in the outcome of the case. The evidence of a witness with a demonstrable interest of that kind cannot be treated as impartial. The evidence provided by a suspect is not quite the same. It must also be treated with caution just in case the suspect is in fact a culprit or accessory. But that cannot be assumed. The danger here is one of circularity: implying that because *Y* may be guilty, his/her evidence is unreliable, and using that evidence of the person's guilt! A surprising number of candidates committed this classic error, though in a more roundabout way.

As observed above, one of the commonest faults of all was recounting the incident and paraphrasing what the witnesses said, often at some length. Only a very small proportion of the mark is available for reporting what happened and what was said, and only then if it is accompanied by a relevant critical comment, and/or a valid inference is drawn from it.

Question 2

(a)   Few problems here. Most candidates recognised the conclusion and main reasons and paraphrased them accurately.

(b)   This proved a difficult question for candidates who mistakenly described how the policy failed instead of explaining why it did.

(c)   Identifying underlying assumptions remains one of the most demanding tasks in the syllabus, and only a few candidates correctly answered the question. The strategy for identifying assumptions is to look for something the author has overlooked, some other possibility, especially one which might have led to a different conclusion. Here the author is claiming that car chases should be banned because there is an inevitable tendency for the cars to go too fast for safety. It is this inevitability that is assumed, or to put it more plainly, there is an assumption by the author that a good police driver cannot both catch car-thieves and drive at a safe speed. Of course, it may be true that they cannot do this. But in this argument it is not established that it is, nor even claimed; and thus it remains an assumption.

A second assumption, for arguing that car-thieves should not be chased on the grounds that it causes accidents, is that the accidents would not happen anyway (i.e. if there is no pursuit). If a car-thief is just left to drive around and not chased and stopped, he or she might still drive dangerously.

(d)   Most candidates decided that the statement weakened the argument, which is the obvious answer. In fact it only weakens it a little, if at all, since the main argument is that there are better, safer ways of catching criminals (carthieves or others) than car chases. However, credit was given to candidates who pointed out that the author has given, as one reason, that the police should be catching serious criminals instead of chasing petty ones, and that if some of those who steal cars are also serious criminals, the distinction is undermined.

(e)   There were few problems with this question.

(f)   The technique of argument from analogy is the issue here. Candidates were more or less evenly divided into those who understood the technique, and how to evaluate its success, and those who did not. Like all analogies this one stands or falls on how parallel, in relevant respects, the objects of comparison are. Namely, accidents involving armed police, on one hand, and car chases on the other. Most gained marks for identifying the objects, and many successfully observed similarities and dissimilarities. The hardest element in the question proved to be assessing the degree of support the analogy gave to the argument. Credit went to those answers which picked up on one or more significant dissimilarities (e.g. that guns are designed to kill and cars are not) and used these against the argument; and/or to those that observed that both cars and guns can be 'weapons', and explained how this strengthened the argument. There were some very good answers to this question.

Question 3

As always, and as expected, this was the toughest question.

It asks for a three-part response, with the second one further broken down:

- analysis (of the argument);
- evaluation (of the assumptions, strengths and weaknesses, clarity of terms and the effect of language);
- further argument.

It is not necessary for candidates to separate these in their own essays, but it has to be said those that do make it easier for themselves to address all three tasks. If the Examiner has to decide where evaluation blurs into further reasoning (or vice-versa), it is more difficult to award full credit.

The key to success in any question of this type is recognising the main conclusion. Marks are awarded for recognising the general drift or direction of the argument, but to give an analysis at level 2 or 3 (see mark scheme), correctly identifying the conclusion is a necessary condition. The next step is to pick out the main reasons given for the conclusion, leaving aside any background or contextual information. The last step is to organise the reasons to show how they relate to each other and to the conclusion, especially if one or more of the reasons is itself supported by other reasons to form an intermediate conclusion. A full analysis of the passage, needed for the highest level of marks, would also include recognition that the function of the first paragraph is introductory, providing a target for the argument which follows.

Evaluation was the least well-executed part of the task, except with regard to the use of language, which, generally speaking, candidates addressed well. Many also picked up on the author's sweeping claims about the perceived dangers and discomforts of flying, and refuted these with counter-claims about the training and professionalism of pilots, the safety-measures, escape provisions, etc. Many commented on the claim that flying is for birds but is unnatural for us, taking us where we were 'not meant to go'. Some pointed out that humans naturally have the technical skills to build and fly planes, just as birds have wings; and many built a successful objection out of this.

Only a handful of candidates went to the core of the argument by identifying and challenging the author's assumption that natural responses, such as fear, can be described as rational or otherwise.

As observed above, it was apparent that many candidates had left insufficient time to do justice to this question. Although there is no need to write a lot to score well on **Question 3**, adequate time to read, think, and plan an answer is essential.