
THINKING SKILLS

9694/42

Paper 4 Applied Reasoning

May/June 2015

1 hour 30 minutes

No Additional Materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet is provided inside this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer **all** the questions.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question.

This document consists of **7** printed pages, **1** blank page and **1** insert.

- 1 Study the information below and answer the question that follows.

\$5 000 000 a year wasted by local schools

A recent study suggests that local schools may have wasted as much as \$5 000 000 in the last year. The study looked at the prices paid for items such as books, furniture, computers and building repairs in a number of local schools. The schools bought expensive items and services when there were less expensive alternatives available. Apart from staff wages, the schools spent a total of \$100 000 over a period of one month, but they could have bought the equivalent for \$20 000 less if they had used other suppliers. Over a year that is a potential saving of \$240 000. The schools that were involved make up 5% of the schools in the county so it is likely that schools in the county are wasting \$4 800 000 every year.

Make five criticisms of the statistics used in the passage or any inferences drawn from them. [5]

Questions 2, 3 and 4 refer to Documents 1 to 5.

- 2 Briefly analyse Student President's argument in Document 1: *Response by the Student Union of Barchester University to the draft proposals for a new degree of Bachelor of Humanities*, by identifying its main conclusion, intermediate conclusions and any counter-assertions. [6]
- 3 Give a critical evaluation of the strength of Student President's argument in Document 1: *Response by the Student Union of Barchester University to the draft proposals for a new degree of Bachelor of Humanities*, by identifying and explaining any flaws, implicit assumptions and other weaknesses. [9]
- 4 'Universities should award degrees on the basis of Continuous Assessment (CA).'

Construct a reasoned argument to support **or** challenge this claim, commenting critically on some or all of Documents 1 to 5 and introducing ideas of your own. [30]

DOCUMENT 1**Response by the Student Union of Barchester University to the draft proposals for a new degree of Bachelor of Humanities**

We are disappointed that, under the draft proposals, degrees will be awarded solely on the basis of written examinations taken at the end of the course. Since the panel which produced the proposals was chaired by the former Dean of Humanities, now retired, it is not surprising that the proposals are so old-fashioned and backward-looking.

We recommend that the new degree should be assessed solely by essays and projects written during the course. This will put our university in the forefront of innovation. Instead of remaining in the third rank of universities, implementing our suggestion will make us be seen as trend-setters.

Some students perform badly in examinations because they are nervous under stress, have poor memories or find it difficult to think quickly. It is unfair that they should be penalised for these difficulties, because they are not their fault. These problems are especially relevant to this course, because it is aimed at mature students, many of whom are likely to have a history of academic failure.

Traditional written examinations assess short-term memory, superficial thinking and the ability to write quickly. These are not the skills which Higher Education should be developing. The purpose of universities is to enable students to explore subjects at depth, to develop their own, informed opinions on matters of universal importance, and to ponder unhurriedly on the mysteries of the universe.

The former Dean has argued that unseen written examinations produce a wider range of marks than assessment by essays, but that is not a valid reason for relying on them. You could obtain an even greater spread by listing the candidates according to their birthdays, but it would not be measuring anything significant.

By contrast, writing an essay forces students to engage with the material they have been taught or can discover for themselves and to apply it to a specific issue. These are the skills which employers are looking for. Group projects are especially valuable, since they develop and assess teamwork in addition to other skills. So anyone who passes a degree assessed in these ways should be in a very strong position for gaining a job. This is also the reason why there is no merit in the superficial criticism that students might “cheat” by obtaining their essays from the internet. The ability to answer problems by researching on the internet is, in fact, one of the most valuable skills in the modern workplace.

Assessing modules promptly has many advantages over the traditional pattern of assessment. It consolidates the learning from each module more efficiently, and it also solves the problem of what to do about students who miss final exams or perform below their best because of illness or family problems. Finally, it helps students if any difficulties they may have in understanding or applying their studies are revealed early enough in their education for them to try harder or to ask for help.

Student President

DOCUMENT 2

Against Continuous Assessment

In recent years there has been a gradual move by higher education institutions worldwide in favour of a continuous assessment approach. Very few courses are now assessed by means of all-or-nothing 'finals' at the very end. There are, admittedly, some advantages to the new approach, but continuous assessment can have a harmful effect on the learning process.

Splitting an academic year in two and dividing exams between winter and summer does have benefits. Most modules only last for a single semester and having an examination soon after the last lecture of term makes a lot of sense. There is no point in waiting until the summer when it has been months since you last looked at notes on that subject. However, I would not want to go any further than that.

When choosing modules, I read through a module description and check how I shall be assessed. If a module has an essay, a presentation and an end of semester exam, I am less inclined to take it. Why? Because by week 4 the date is set for my presentation; by week 6 I receive the title of an essay that is due on the last day of term and which I can't really start working on until I've got the presentation out of the way; then on top of all that, I have to study for an end-of-semester exam.

The result is that I am under constant pressure through the whole module, cramming and rushing to finish essays and presentations. Instead of learning and having a real interest in the subject, I end up concentrating all my attention on impending deadlines.

Student website

DOCUMENT 3**A Right Place to Buy Coursework**

Thousands of university students buy coursework every week. Why does it happen? How does it happen? Do they have problems with academic writing? Are there any other reasons?

Although you may be one of the best students, responsible and hardworking, there is always a chance of failure. It happens regardless of your skills and knowledge, but rather due to unexpected circumstances. You may fall ill or have too much other stuff on your mind. If you buy coursework online, it helps you concentrate and solve other important issues.

Every education system has its flaws. Sometimes it is physically impossible to cope with everything. When it happens, try to pick what's more important. It is often easier to buy coursework while working on writing assignments for other classes.

Academic writing might be not your thing. Can you imagine a practical application of this kind of educational activity? We can't. However, a curriculum of every university includes tens of them. That is why sometimes you feel so tired of doing unnecessary research that to buy coursework feels to be the only option.

Again, you may be an excellent writer not confident in your talents. Sometimes a paper is just a regular assignment, while in other cases it might determine a great deal of your final rating. If so, why not buy coursework from experienced specialists and get a secured high grade? We do guarantee you a good mark.

If you buy coursework from us, it gives you a great deal of free time. You may use it to work and get money. Thus, you literally earn by ordering from us.

Finally, if you buy coursework from us, no one will ever find out. We take security issues seriously and struggle to protect our customer database.

Due to the above-mentioned, we dare to claim that ordering from our company is not only beneficial, but plain reasonable. Buy coursework online and forget your worries – they will be our job. We're ready to do it now!

Advertisement

from essay-writing company

DOCUMENT 4

The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area

The Bologna Process is a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications. This process has created the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Universities which are part of the EHEA have had to develop a new way of looking at the teaching—learning process. Students are at the centre of the learning process, and so the assessment systems have to be designed to assist them in this process, by enabling them to know throughout the term what they have (or have not) learned, to what extent they have achieved the objectives of a subject or activity, in what areas they need to improve, and so on. This new learning process demands, therefore, that student assessment should be continuous.

This new approach to the assessment process has caused important changes in the methodology of lecturers. They must now include in their courses a variety of activities that will be assessed and thus constitute part of the student's final mark. Students are now required to do more work (such as completing various assignments and participating in class) in order to pass the subject.

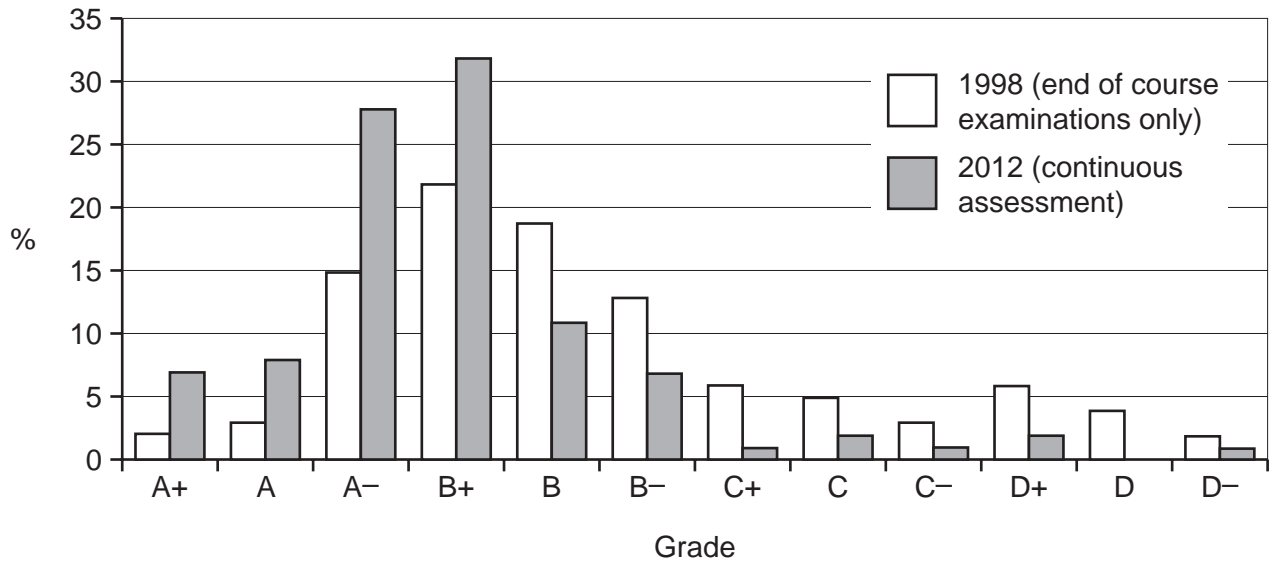
A survey of practice within the EHEA has discovered that the following methods of Continuous Assessment are in use:

- **End-of-term tests** are very common and represent a hang-over from the previous system of assessment, which relied entirely on end-of-course examinations.
- **Mid-term exams** are theoretical or practical tests done during the term; on some courses, material tested in this way is never tested again and can therefore be forgotten.
- **Exercises and case studies** consist of practical exercises or analytical case studies that students are assigned to do, either in class or privately.
- **Essays** are written assignments handed in by students and typically involve reading and comprehension of texts and personal reasoning.
- **Teamwork** consists of a final essay or project, typically done throughout the term by several students working together.
- **Oral presentations** are the equivalent of an essay, project or case study, presented orally to a group instead of (or as well as) in writing.
- **Student progress** consists of the record of students' attendance and observation by the lecturer of the interest shown in class.

Guidebook to Higher Education in Europe

DOCUMENT 5

Comparison between student results at Eastway University before and after the introduction of continuous assessment in degree courses



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