

GCE 2002

June Series



Report on the Examination

General Studies *Specification A*

- Advanced Subsidiary
- Advanced

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Kathleen Tattersall, Director General

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Specification A

GSA1 Culture, Morality, Art and Humanities

General Comments

The examiners felt that this was an appropriate test combining key Unit topics of personal, moral and social judgements on themes appropriate to children's literature, the specific benefits of reading fiction, and the broader value of the arts in general to people's lives. The passage was relatively straightforward and appeared to present no particular difficulties of interpretation to candidates, except for some in appreciating the author's position on the issues raised. The majority appeared to have sufficient time to complete all parts of the test, although as before, there were some short and incomplete answers to Question 2.3, and it was recognised that in this test both Questions 2.2 and 2.3 were relatively broad and potentially extensive questions. Candidates' scores on the multiple choice questions were almost identical to those in May 2001, but slightly lower on the structured writing, largely through lack of illustration on Questions 2.2 and 2.3. Lack of attention to the wording of the questions also caused some candidates to do less well than they might. In answer to Question 2.1 weaker candidates sometimes wrote a loose paraphrase or commentary on the passage, and on the other two questions limited their response to the benefits of fiction and the arts for children. They also frequently included references to literature in 2.3 despite the fact that this was specifically ruled out by the question. Once again there were disturbingly frequent examples of weak expression, inadequate syntax, grammar and punctuation. Words which continued to be commonly misspelt, despite most of them appearing in the text or questions, were:

a lot, argument, criticism, innocence, interest, literature, moral, opinion, separate.

Question 1

The selection of multiple choice questions worked well with an overall mean facility of 61% and good discrimination. The mean mark was 15 with a standard deviation of 4.2. 89% of candidates scored 10 marks or more and 17% scored 20 or more. Four questions stood out as more difficult for the average candidate with facilities of less than 40%. These were 1.8 on the author's criticism of Enid Blyton, where 62% opted for D (unrealistic) rather than the correct answer A (condescending); 1.21 where candidates' responses were fairly evenly divided between A, B and D, the correct answer being A on the grounds that the author was not claiming that teenage fiction had evolved naturally from classic children's fiction; similarly 1.23 where most candidates were split between C and D, the latter answer being correct in that none of the statements applied to the author's position on children's fiction; and finally 1.24 on the author's overall approach to the subject, where slightly more opted for A (biased) rather than B (impartial). All of these items however discriminated extremely well between stronger and weaker candidates on the test as a whole.

Question 2.1

Most candidates were able to reach Level 2 marks by means of at least two supported points and references back to the text on each side of the argument. Comprehensive responses with specific and accurate reference scored Level 3 marks, and these were sometimes made more convincing because candidates had actually read some of the texts referred to and were able to respond to them on a personal level. Stronger answers often made the point that what may be suitable for one age group is

not necessarily appropriate for another, and also that children develop at different rates and capacities. Weaker candidates tended to rely too much on wholesale copying of quotes from the text without developing their own summary and evaluation of the arguments; for example, some merely reiterated Nick Seaton's claim that adult themes might drive an increasing number of young people to suicide, however unlikely that assertion might be.

Question 2.2

The majority of candidates were able to suggest some tangible benefits of reading fiction, most typically for relaxation, stimulation of the imagination, a chance to learn about different people and places, and to improve facility in language. Some offered a full range of finer points, such as the examination of human nature and emotions, or sheer enjoyment of a good story, but very few offered appropriate exemplification to secure the highest marks. Weaker candidates were too reliant on drawing their points and examples solely from the text and often limited the benefits to children, even though the question was intended to be broader. It was also notable that most of the references were from children's literature, repeated from the text itself, or from set texts, rather than any candidates' own reading, which might have been more effective and convincing.

Question 2.3

This question produced the most disappointing answers and the lowest marks, perhaps because it was the last question on the paper and received the least attention, but also because like the previous question, many candidates did or could not go beyond just a few general points and give examples to illustrate their arguments. Too many were imprecise about what constitutes 'the arts' and allowed themselves to be side-tracked into analysing media presentation, including news, current affairs and sport, and there was also confusion between 'use' and 'value', which some saw merely in economic terms. Film, music and the visual arts provided the most scope for an appropriate answer, but some struggled to generate illustrations beyond the needs of children and literature, despite the wording of the question. The examiners however felt that this was a standard General Studies arts question for which candidates might have been expected to be better prepared.

GSA2 Science, Mathematics and Technology

Section 1

Questions 1-25

Candidates generally handled the passage and questions well. The section proved to be marginally easier than the June 2001 paper though slightly more difficult than the January 2002 paper. The discrimination was better than June 2002 though slightly worse than January 2002. As in June 2002 there was a slight improvement in performance from pre-test to test. As in January there were a number of year 13 candidates in the cohort, nevertheless performance was closer to that of the previous summer than the performance in January.

A few questions posed problems.

In Question 5 more candidates opted for distractor B than the key, D. B did not include ‘plastic is moulded at relatively low temperatures’, and, although this is implied in the passage, candidates seem to have missed it.

Question 16 performed very oddly. The facility in pre-test was over 60%, the question was unchanged, and facility fell to 45%, while the percentage of candidates choosing D rather than A rose from 27% to 47%. This was a question that related exactly to units used in GCSE Science and it is difficult to understand why the performance should show such a marked change. The test data suggests that the more able candidates were choosing the correct key.

Question 24 had a low facility although it discriminated quite well. In contrast Question 25 proved easier but discriminated poorly. This may reflect the difficulty that some candidates seem to have with assertion/reason questions. These questions ask for the candidates to make several stages in their assessment of the answer, first to decide whether the assertion is true, then to decide whether the reason is true, then whether the reason explains the assertion. In order to do well on these questions they need to have learned the technique and had adequate practice on this type of question.

Section 2

Questions 26-50

Overall candidates achieved very similar results to those taking the paper in January 2002 and the previous January, the mean facility being 51% each time, although this was not quite as good as the previous summer. All questions discriminated at least satisfactorily, and most did so very well.

Candidates found two questions significantly easier than the rest of those in the paper, both having a facility of over 80%.

Question 26 – on simultaneous equations, for which it was not necessary for candidates to work algebraically to find the value of each individual unknown price.

Question 36 – stating the range of a set of data from a cumulative frequency graph.

It was pleasing to note that one of the two further questions having the next highest facility, (of approximately 65%) was Question 28 on depreciation, a topic which has not always achieved a high facility in previous examinations.

Four questions had a distractor attracting more responses than the correct answer. Three of these, and one further question, had facilities below 35%, but they all discriminated very satisfactorily.

Question 30 – finding an average speed, but requiring candidates to be able to convert from kilometres to miles – had a facility of 40%, but a slightly greater proportion of candidates selected response C.

Question 31 – calculating a speed, with time given in hours and minutes – relied on the same stem as Question 30. The most common response here was for response B, which included the value obtained if candidates assumed that the journey time was three hours, as given in Question 30. Candidates, however, need to be made aware that the information to solve any one question in a set of questions with a common stem will either be given in the stem or in the question itself. They will not be expected or required to use information within one question to answer a different question.

Question 37 – inter-quartile range – had the key as the most popular response, but distractors C and D also attracted a similar proportion of candidates; discrimination in this question was particularly good however.

Question 42 – trigonometry – resulted in distractors C and D both attracting a higher number of responses than the key. C can be obtained by assuming the vertical distance is 2 metres, ignoring the depth at the shallow end. Selecting response D would appear to indicate candidates either failing to read (or understand) the term 'horizontal' or (and perhaps more likely?) using trigonometry correctly, but failing to identify the position of the angle that has been found.

Question 50 – making deductions from given statements – had the lowest facility, with option D being the most popular response. The statistical analysis however, did indicate that the more able candidates were opting for the correct response. Many candidates, however, appeared either unprepared or unable to deduce a correct conclusion from a given set of statements.

GA3W Society, Politics and the Economy (Written)

General Comments

There was a significant increase in an already large entry for Unit 3. Although there are still candidates who are demonstrably under-prepared for an examination based on skills-based analysis of sources there can be little doubt that the majority are now better equipped to deal with the main requirements of the paper. At least some basic skills of source analysis are now more in evidence and, although the proportion of outstanding candidates remains small, overall performance levels are slowly rising with fewer very poor answers.

It remains the case that only a minority of candidates can spell the word ‘bias’, use it appropriately and acknowledge that a source which shows bias becomes ‘biased’. Other words which continue to present a problem are ‘criticism’, ‘exaggerated’, ‘appalling’ and, in the case of the subject matter in May 2002, ‘dole’ – which sometimes appeared as ‘doll’.

Question 1

Although a few candidates felt obliged either to evaluate the report in a manner not required by the question or to include material that was not in the source, most understood that this was a relatively straightforward question which required only the *identification* of relevant points.

Not everyone made it clear that their answer focused on aspects of rural poverty but most were able to identify points like the lack of a national strategy for rural areas; disproportionate attention applied to towns and cities; levels of isolation and social exclusion experienced by many rural dwellers; the absence of rural targeting by government; limited, and primarily unskilled, job opportunities; and the closure of banks and post offices which caused major inconvenience in rural areas.

With only 5 marks available, it was widely understood that an answer which included most of the above points need take no more than a paragraph to reach Level III. The time allowance of 1¼ hours is not generous and it is important that candidates are able to reach and complete the final question because it always carries 15 marks.

Question 2

Most candidates were prepared for a question of this nature (reliability of a source) but it was clear that some had learned a formula which they tried to apply without either being selective or, in some cases, making many references to the source.

Although there were a few who thought that the *Sunday Mirror* was a right-wing broadsheet written primarily for the upper classes, most identified it as a tabloid. Unfortunately, there was an overwhelming tendency to vilify everything connected with this form of best-selling journalism and to compare it most unfavourably with the less frequently read ‘serious’ newspapers.

Tabloids do not deal exclusively in gossip, trivia and pictures of scantily-clad females. They do not habitually ‘tell lies’ and they do sometimes use investigative reporting to expose practices which may make us feel uneasy. It may well be that stories of child exploitation are sensationalised or exaggerated to engage the interest of readers and increase sales. However, reports of groups like The International Labour Organisation make it clear that accounts similar to the one featured by the *Sunday Mirror* are far from ‘absurd’ or ‘invented’. Though biased, the source was not, as many maintained, ‘completely one-sided’.

The best marks went to those who argued that exploitation of child labour did exist throughout the world but that the evidence offered in this source was limited to a small number of hazily identified examples. The journalist may not have had first-hand experience of such conditions and his account was contradicted by someone who claimed not to have seen any children working in such circumstances. Emotive language featured regularly in the source and the final paragraph was at worst irrelevant and at best conferred a sort of specious morality on the reporting. Photographic and statistical evidence was absent. Few candidates were able to reach the highest mark by articulating and explaining *a range of relevant points supported by references from the source*.

Question 3

This was a good question for separating candidates of different abilities. It was encouraging to note that a higher proportion of candidates can reach at least Level II in questions which call for the identification of strengths and weaknesses in sources. Unfortunately, a minority are still drawn by the content and rely on re-writing information from the source, in this case often suggesting that statistics identifying structural problems such as unemployment, low pay and difficulties of lone parents were automatically ‘weaknesses’ because they were reporting ‘bad news’.

Fewer people made the automatic assumption that statistics were always ‘reliable facts’ and most suggested that those used in a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, independently monitored, based on 50 indicators of poverty & social exclusion and published by The Stationery Office were likely to be as reliable as most. Bullet points were deemed to be a strength but their random nature, coverage of only *some* of the findings, and tendency to include too much information were all deemed correctly to be potential weaknesses.

Most felt that the information was reasonably clear but only the most astute expressed concerns about undefined references to things like ‘male median hourly earnings’ and the extent to which most people, and particularly those featured in the report, would ever come across publications by The Stationery Office. The bold even went on to say that statistical sources could benefit by including some interpretation or evaluation and that this particular source became, in the words of one candidate, ‘deadly dull’. It is encouraging that a growing number of candidates are becoming more perceptive and even, on occasions, candid in their assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Provided such views are based on evidence they are welcomed by examiners.

Question 4

Many candidates were familiar with the government’s anti-fraud benefit campaign and some answers even referred to its appearance on television. Both parts of the question provided better candidates with an ethical dilemma. Almost everyone was critical of the actions of benefit cheats on both moral and legal grounds although few pursued their ideas far enough to reach the highest mark levels where more explicit reflection on the nature of knowledge was required to meet Assessment Objective 4.

Many pointed out that the whole point of the benefit system was to take care of those genuinely in need and not to provide opportunities for financing holidays when many hard-working taxpayers might not be able to afford them. It was pointed out that the aggregate of small-scale fraud could be considerable and that fraudulent claims were taking money away from other hard-pressed public services. The dilemma came when examples of more genuine need were raised by some candidates – single mothers often being quoted in this context. Morally, those in this position gained at least more sympathy and a few candidates argued that if the minimum wage, or benefit levels for the genuinely needy were raised, giving an income that permitted a life just above subsistence level, the incidence of cheating might be diminished.

This was, on the surface, a simple source – but one with a deep meaning. Not everyone understood the style, purpose and subtlety of the portrayal and some wasted time trying to evaluate a source which

was never more than clever and creative propaganda designed for a specific purpose – to counter benefit fraud. Most thought the portrayal with its short questions, simple rhetoric, and changing fonts served its purpose very effectively, revealing the selfishness and arrogance of people who were, to all intents and purposes, thieves who disregarded others in taking actions that were plainly wrong. The best answers thought beyond this and suggested that the colloquial language was inaccurate in indicating that benefit cheats were likely to come from one social group. This was deemed to be stereotyping cheats and excellent answers went on to point out the dangers of this leading to the stigmatising all benefit claimants, including the many with genuine rights.

Although few had the capacity to achieve the AO4 marks which predominated in this question, it was good to see that many answers reached at least Level II. The issue of benefit fraud is much more complex than the condemnation of “low life” behaviour that was sometimes applied. Nobody can be sure what fraud costs but it is likely to be billions of pounds and can be part of systematic and large-scale criminal activities. Equally, there are millions of genuine claimants, some of whom find it very difficult to get the benefits for which they rightfully qualify.

Whatever we may use as forms of knowledge (AO4), and although our industrialised society and its associated systems are more sophisticated, we have to say that all forms of knowledge have their limitations and we should not necessarily expect to find ‘answers’ to highly complex social problems. Several centuries ago, the Tudors tried to make a distinction between the ‘indolent’ (undeserving) and ‘impotent’ (deserving) poor. Much more has been written since then but, in some respects, we are no closer to a solution to the problem of getting benefits to those in need while, at the same time, successfully deterring those who are not.

Question 5

There is evidence that some candidates are not organising their time effectively with some answers to this question (which carries 15 marks) being no longer than answers to the two opening questions which each carried only 5 marks.

Most answers simply worked through the key ideas. Potentially, this was a sound strategy but some candidates used just their own knowledge without reference to Sources A and C – thus restricting themselves to a maximum of 8 marks – while others (who did not necessarily write short answers) provided little analysis and many vague and generalised ideas.

The ideas listed in Source E were widely felt to be good ones but the means by which they could be carried out were rarely explored and sometimes largely ignored. Better training for adults would lead to improved job opportunities with higher pay. Anti-social behaviour was a blight on the lives of many people and neighbourhood wardens – rather in the way of magic fairies – could spirit it away. Arts and sports would keep the bored occupied, local organisations could have more money and the return of shops to rural areas would be more convenient and provide jobs. Such descriptive answers rarely moved beyond Level I because they did not address the central issue of *how* the key ideas could be carried out successfully.

Those who did recognise the need for an *analysis* of the key ideas often scored high marks. Some candidates were clearly pleased to have the opportunity to write about the economics and relative isolation of rural life, quite rightly emphasising that social exclusion was not just an urban phenomenon. Using Source A to good effect, they pointed out the problems of training in rural areas; the absence of jobs for those who became more skilled; the difficulties of tackling anti-social behaviour in areas of dispersed population; the relative poverty of local organisations who often had to jump through many administrative hoops to get small sums of money, and the fact that shops, banks and post offices had closed because demand was not high enough to make them economically viable. Such answers provided a valuable insight into an issue that is often not fully explored.

Those who used Source C effectively tried to put the key ideas in the context of a huge national problem which needed considerable political commitment and a massive infusion of resources. Not everyone might want to be trained, poor people rarely had access to computers and the very anti-social behaviour that needed to be tackled might result in theft of equipment or vandalism. This would be a deterrent to those wishing to set up skills centres and to anyone thinking of trying to re-establish a shop in an area where incomes were low and the chances of theft and damage high. Even the introduction of neighbourhood wardens, which had worked successfully in some areas, might be seen as a potential difficulty in areas where the dominant sub-culture was suspicious of, or even hostile to, any figure that seemed to represent authority.

Once again, a complex social, political and economic problem was presented. The best answers showed an exceptional insight into the issues involved, providing an analysis which might easily have impressed John Prescott with whom the key ideas were linked. It is both encouraging and refreshing to report on the quality of some scripts which make a nonsense of the oft-repeated view that young people are politically illiterate and that they have little or no interest in political problems. In the context of party politics, and what young people often see as meaningless bickering between middle-aged men, adversarial posturing and a preoccupation with the pursuit of power and status, there may be some truth in this.

That many do not recognise the considerable efforts of at least some politicians to contribute to the democratic process in a way that helps the lives of many people may be a much bigger point of concern. However, when given the opportunity to consider issues which are relevant to both the country and their own lives there can be no doubt that many young people respond positively, thoughtfully and sometimes with great sensitivity. As far as possible, through the themes chosen from the specification, this Unit will continue to offer young people the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and skills in this direction through the medium of General Studies.

Key Points

The 2001 report for the May examination included a number of key points designed to aid centres in the preparation of candidates for a unit in which few have had much previous experience at KS4. These comments were well received by centres. The fact that there are fewer points in the 2002 report suggests that some progress is gradually being made. Unfortunately, there is some counter-evidence which suggests that a few centres are still unaware of the need to prepare candidates thoroughly for a skills-based paper.

- *Reading the rubric* is rarely uppermost in the mind of candidates at the start of the examination but there are two things in particular that it would pay to remember. Answers should be in *continuous prose* rather than bullet points and, wherever possible, students should be encouraged to *use their own words* instead of simply repeating often large sections of the sources.
- *Timing is important*. Questions start with 5 marks, move up to 10 and end with 15. Short answers for questions with the lowest marks will leave students with more opportunity to score highly towards the end of the paper.
- Learning associated with '*theme spotting*' is likely to be a waste of time. Working through the more basic *skills associated with contemporary source material* is likely to be far more productive.
- Of the skills, the ability to distinguish between *fact* and *opinion*, to recognise *bias* and to understand the factors which help to make a source *reliable* are paramount.
- Understandably, AO4 remains an elusive assessment objective for many candidates. In recognition of this, AQA is issuing an explanatory booklet to Centres during the Autumn Term. It applies to the AS examination and contains useful 'worked examples' and comment designed to support staff and students.
- There are now sufficient 'previous papers' to provide some worthwhile opportunities to practise answers which focus on the *key command word(s)* in each question. In May 2002, these were:

- Q1** *Identify* (straightforward, mainly selection/description).
- Q2** *Question the reliability* (more analytical – select examples to illustrate style of language, bias, exaggeration, incomplete/restricted evidence).
- Q3** *Strengths and weaknesses* (select examples to illustrate areas like origin of source, bias, objectivity, subjectivity, fallacies, range of evidence, reliability, use of language).
- Q4** *Acceptable actions...manner of portrayal* (more abstract and philosophical thinking; what is in the source to influence acceptability and portrayal?; what do we mean when we use words such as these? how can we look at such words, in the context of the source, in different ways?)
- Q5** *Source E...Own knowledge...information from Sources A and C...carried out successfully* (wide-ranging and will need time for thinking and planning; think ‘how’ and ‘why’ – how, in real life, might policies be implemented and why might they be more or less successful? What do we mean by success? [not necessarily a massive gain which we might all like, but an incremental advance that makes things a bit better]).
- There is much pressure in all subjects to ‘cover the specification’. Discussion with students about *thinking analytically* and *thinking critically (and positively)* will always pay dividends irrespective of the theme that is used.

GA3C Society, Politics and the Economy (Coursework)

General Comments

The coursework submission for June 2002 was from 35 centres with a total candidate entry of 751. This was an encouraging increase on the previous year and in general the coursework was completed to a good standard. It was particularly pleasing to note that the vast majority of centres had addressed issues concerning coursework raised in previous examination reports. Centres had encouraged their candidates to submit pieces with appropriate titles that enabled them to demonstrate clear evidence of planning and make effective use of source materials. It would again appear that the Autumn support meetings organised by AQA are an invaluable focus for the preparation of candidates by centres.

The moderation process was conducted according to AQA guidelines. It was the general consensus of the team that the majority of centres submitted their sample to meet the deadline set by the Board and the administrative tasks were efficiently dealt with by them. There were however some issues raised by the moderation process and these included several relating to administrative procedures.

- Most of the work submitted was to a good standard and the majority of candidates did complete their submission within the 1500 word limit.
- The vast majority of titles selected by candidates were appropriate to the GA3C module as designated by the specification.
- The coursework was largely submitted in the structure recommended by the Board meeting the Assessment Objectives set out in the specification.
- The team was particularly encouraged with the effective use of source material by many candidates and the exemplars/in text referencing systems adopted by them.
- Candidates demonstrated a clearer understanding of the aims of the coursework undertaken and many produced pieces with a clear sense of the need to separate evidence from opinion, an area that had caused difficulty in previous examinations.
- The majority of centres demonstrated a high degree of efficiency in the preparation, planning, organisation and assessment of candidates' work.

Centre Specific

- There were some serious administrative errors and these resulted in a delay in the moderation of some samples. Centres must meet the deadlines issued by the Board and comply fully with administrative procedures. If there is any uncertainty about procedures then either the Subject Officer or designated coursework advisor should be contacted.
- Centres must read the Specification and ensure that staff and candidates are fully aware of the Assessment Objectives and the Assessment Criteria applicable to the coursework unit. Once again, there were some centres, which demonstrated a lack of application of Assessment Objective AO4 '*demonstrate understanding of different types of knowledge and of the relationship between them, appreciating their limitations*'. Supervising teachers must ensure that their candidates are encouraged to focus on the source material and to distinguish between evidence and opinion.

- There are still some candidates producing pieces which exceed the 1500 word limit by some margin. Centres must advise their candidates to meet this target, as long submissions will not result in the allocation of more marks. A succinct and effectively rationalised piece will always produce a better result.
- Several candidates did not submit either a list of their sources or a bibliography. Vague references to textbooks or web sites do not constitute a viable source document. Conversely some candidates used an excessive range of sources and their submissions were superficial as they struggled to address aspects derived from all of them.
- Where marks are awarded to candidates, they must be justified with comments or some in-text indication of the mark allocation. A final mark with no supporting statements does not meet AQA marking requirements.
- If candidates insist on using questionnaires to substantiate their opinions then they must ensure that a reasonable population is sampled. Several candidates submitted questionnaire analysis based on as few as two interviews, and worthwhile conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small sample. Questionnaires are best avoided.

GSA4 Culture, Morality, Art and Humanities

Question 1

General Comments

The three language options performed satisfactorily overall. In line with efforts to encourage a greater sense of fulfilment and success in this component across the three languages, both French and Spanish papers produced very pleasing, improved results. German, although reaching a creditable standard slipped from its improved position of January 2002, but for reasons difficult to ascertain.

Comparisons with January 2002 should be taken with some caution, however, since the entry in January was significantly lower.

With the January figures given in brackets, the mean facility for French was 62% (50%), for German 49% (55%) and for Spanish 60% (55%). In this examination the mean mark for French was 15.5 (SD 4.1), for German 12.2 (SD 4.7) and for Spanish 15.0 (SD 5.0).

Both French and Spanish are performing at the desired level for this component, at around the 60% mean. German was unable to match this improvement in spite of perceived parity of demand across all three languages. There were, however, no notably easy questions (with a mean facility over 65) in the German paper compared with French and Spanish, even though conscious efforts are constantly being made to improve accessibility. The stimulus material remains demanding and as far as possible authentic, yet there is greater emphasis upon the recognition of key themes – in a mixture of general and more linguistically specific items for each text – to reflect primarily the abilities of the casual reader in the foreign language.

French

Easy questions were identified as 1-5, 7-9, 13, 14, 21 and 24. Questions 1- 4 were intentionally straightforward, requiring global comprehension of text.

The only difficult question was 20 where B, closely followed by C, were popular choices to the correct answer D. To reach D, a wide comprehension of the whole article was needed to eliminate possible preconceptions of being able to camp without insurance or permission.

Only question 16 discriminated poorly, yet better candidates statistically opted for C.

German

No individual questions proved particularly easy or difficult, and no questions discriminated poorly.

There was no cause for concern prior to the examination that demands were different in relation to the other languages, but still the outcome was somewhat disappointing in comparison. Nevertheless, performance was consistent throughout, with the vast majority of scores falling within the mean facility range of mid 40 to high 50.

Spanish

There were several easy questions: 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 24 and 25. Several of these (3, 11, 24, 25) were based upon common sense but still required corroboration from the text. Question 14 was straightforward, and 15 was identifiable as a direct equivalent to *es difícil de determinar*.

Question 10 was a difficult question with a notable distractor – only 25% opted for the correct answer B, but 44% opted for A – possibly lured by *demanda*, but not in *academic* terms – and 27% for D. The more able candidates, however, were opting for the correct key B.

Question 2 discriminated poorly.

Question 2

General Comments

These questions are devised to cover the six main areas of this part of the specification and reference to the essay mark scheme makes it clear which elements of the response will be rewarded. The scheme incorporates all four of the Assessment Objectives and puts scripts into five different levels. As always the hope of the examiners and setters is that as many answers as possible will be rewarded at level 5 – demonstrating ‘Commanding treatment of the question.’ A few very able responses did indeed demonstrate analytical skills of an exceptional order.

Essays were, on the whole, rather longer than they had been in January and in the legacy General Studies examination. Candidates had more time to write and some used it well. All too often, however, it was clear that students had not been prepared for essay writing in this area of the specification. Many were unable to offer either a reasonable essay style or to provide a balanced examination of a range of implications of the question. The questions are carefully worded to encourage students to look at various aspects of a topic. Above all, far too many were unwilling to offer illustration to prove the points they were making. There are specific essay skills which involve marshalling and presenting arguments and opinion in a logical sequence, developing each important point and illustrating it with examples. A brief and pertinent conclusion is also helpful – not least as a moment where the candidate checks that they have indeed covered the whole of the question. Many students do not write essays in their other subjects and without practice this skill does not develop fully. It is obvious to examiners which centres have been encouraged to hone these skills.

A worrying trend is an increasing number of candidates who open the paper and attempt to answer all 6 essays - as many as 10% in some centres. Although the instruction to write one essay only is clear, it is sad that there are candidates who do not seem to have been prepared for the precise demands of the paper. The rubric infringement which was noted in January where candidates attempted the essays in the language they had chosen for the first part of the paper seems to have been solved.

Among the specific virtues noted by examiners it was refreshing to see reference to ‘common sense’ and ‘honesty.’ Indeed there were some very candid and effective answers to 2.1 on the apparent decline of religious observance. Overall, there were fewer really perfunctory scripts and more well structured answers.

The examiners were surprised that the most popular question was 2.1 on the apparent decline of religious observance. Questions 2.3 and 2.4 – substantially arts questions – were relatively unpopular and generally poorly exemplified.

Question 2.1

The most popular question. Those candidates who spent too much time questioning the statistics of the preamble (as they are quite at liberty to do) rather missed the main point of the two-part question. Indeed, for those who did not achieve a balance it was invariably the second part of the question (the effect on cultural, moral and social life) which was less well answered. Some took the history of the decline of religion back a very long way – certainly to pre-reformation days – rather further than necessary. There was a great deal of bemoaning of the decline of attendance at Sunday services, especially by those who confessed to an inability to leave their beds on Sunday mornings. There was also a good deal of refreshing honesty and some good, relevant exemplification from the candidates' own family histories. The majority laid the major blame at the amount of hours which had to be worked nowadays compared to the hours of 100 years ago. They might be very surprised how weak that argument actually is. There was much that was highly critical of church services. Other relatively insignificant factors were picked up and discussed at great length while major issues were often ignored. There was a great deal of knowledge on other faiths and practices.

Question 2.2

A number of candidates struggled to define animal rights. A few were able to conceptualise these issues quite brilliantly. Many could not differentiate between human and animal rights, nor between the different issues of medical and cosmetic experimentation, sport, meat, genetic modification, maltreatment of pets and other issues. Not many were aware of any cultural or political dimensions the question might usefully require and very few were able to point to the activities of liberation organisations. The second part of the question was also quite frequently poorly managed.

Full answers from good candidates included a clear exposition of what animal rights might be – often with an illuminating comparison with human rights – and then a development of each of those rights and their implications for humans (be they farmers, geneticists, pet owners, environmentalists, animal rights activists). Good answers were also able to point to some of the dilemmas and dichotomies inherent in the interaction between humans and animals and argue from a variety of viewpoints.

Question 2.3

'Without the arts the world would be a poorer place' brought forth some answers of stunning range and complexity with exemplification to match. In fact this question was often well tackled though sometimes let down by a lack of real examples. Music and drama were the two most visited areas. Those candidates who tried to argue that soccer was an art form – especially as the examination fell during the closing stages of the World Cup – were unable to convince of their claim. Some weaker candidates also took the line that the question was referring to financial rather than aesthetic poverty. Again, had they been able to argue the point it would have been accepted, but they lacked the skill to produce effective arguments.

Question 2.4

This was generally poorly answered. Many were able to describe effective advertisements but were unable to include sufficient dimension of the arts. Even those who had taken Media Studies courses found it difficult to be specific. The appeal of advertisements was rarely explained and little was written about the language used.

One problem was that the candidates did not look at the nature and purpose of advertising and relate their answers to these matters. Analysis of the extent to which artistic components – language, music, visual imagery – contributed to the success or failure of an advertisement was what was required to access higher levels. Such analysis was unfortunately rare. Candidates also concentrated almost wholly on television advertising. Those who attempt artistic questions are always well advised to think of wider implications of the arts.

Question 2.5

Questions which invited students to extol the virtues of live performances are frequently asked; this one suggested using the theatre as a peg for their answer. There were many turgid and unrealistic answers which exaggerated the stereotypical ‘upper class’ view of theatre and blamed their local repertory theatre for not advertising as widely on national television as new blockbuster films do. A few described their experiences at the theatre, though many did not even get that far. There was much description of the popularity of films and television, though few were able to differentiate between cinema and television. The question asks candidates to use persuasive arguments about live performance – in fact many focused on the tactics required to increase attendance rather than passionate advocacy.

Question 2.6

A question which produced some very competent answers. Few, however, were able to differentiate between the different emphases and reporting styles of various newspapers and many wrote entirely about celebrities, gossip and privacy. Such candidates were unable to see a role for the press in keeping the government and MPs accountable to the public. Some unfortunately thought the ‘free press’ was the kind of local weekly newspaper which comes free to the door. There were many, however, who were able to argue clearly about the role of the press and the way that the role is changed under more authoritarian regimes. Many candidates achieved a creditable balance between arguments for and against a free press and a pleasing number were able to point to the dilemmas caused by both sides of the equation. Limitations were less well tackled. Not many candidates seemed to know anything about current legislation or the limitations of self-regulation.

GSA5 Science, Mathematics and Technology

Section 1

The twenty-five OTQ items performed well with an overall mean facility of 67% (10% better than the pre-test) The mean mark was 16.8 with a standard deviation of 4.3. The median mark of 17 confirms a fairly symmetrical distribution with an upper quartile of 20 and a lower quartile of 14.

There were no individual questions that were a cause for concern. Thirteen of the items were “easy” (a facility of 60% or more) and no item was “difficult”. There was no item with a notable distractor and all items discriminated satisfactorily. The overall demand was marginally easier than January 2002 with the improvement between pre-testing and examination performance being of a much greater scale than was the case in January.

Section 2

The essay questions were answered with the following distribution (based on a sample of 100)

Q2.1	Q2.2	Q2.3	Q2.4	Q2.5	Q2.6
21%	11%	5%	19%	20%	24%

This was the second examination of the new specification with a much larger entry than was the case in January and the revised marking scheme, based on the four assessment objectives, and using a 1 - 25 scale, was used. The panel of examiners was asked to take great care to fix the candidates at one of the five levels and to comment upon this in their marking.

To achieve level 5 required good technical knowledge with a fluent and expressive essay writing style – with assessment objective AO4 clearly evident.

Generally, the quality of work seemed better than was the case with the much smaller entry in January 2002. Responses seemed relatively longer, better written and more focused on the question. Fewer candidates wasted time by writing out the question and many displayed helpful essay plans. Unfortunately, a small number of candidates misread the rubric and offered responses to all six questions.

It seems that the new AS/A2 specifications are having the effect of filtering the better candidates into A2.

Question 2.1

Generally speaking, the candidates had more underpinning knowledge to bring to the discussion of the benefits and disadvantages than in explaining how a wind turbine is used to generate electricity. The best candidates were able to explain the relationship between magnetism and an induced current in an ac generator and then go on and comprehensively discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this means of electricity generation – showing clear understanding and appreciation of the topic.

Question 2.2

This question was well tackled by candidates with good knowledge of intensive and organic farming methods and the influences that have given rise to them. Many good candidates were obviously writing from personal experience and were also able to consider the nature and future of Genetically Modified Food. They may have placed the question in an historical context. Knowledge about hedgerow removal and the use of natural predators in killing pests may have been evident. Weaker candidates may have discussed a limited range of issues and may not have had a sufficiently detailed knowledge to develop points fully.

Question 2.3

This question was probably the least well done of the six. Few candidates were able to give an accurate response to the explanation of the scientific principles of the Global Positioning System. The discussion was tackled relatively more successfully.

Poor responses to the discussion were usually one-sided, based either on the notion that if you have nothing to hide, where's the problem? or that the idea is so preposterous and impractical that further discussion seems unnecessary. The best candidates were able to offer some balanced arguments and widen the debate beyond the international war against terrorism.

Question 2.4

The better candidates were able to appreciate the nature and value of a scientific investigation in trying to establish a relationship between the pairs of factors. They were also able to contrast the acceptance of a scientific approach with a common sense approach. There would be recognition of the need to define and control variables, to define a sample for data collection, to have an hypothesis and some discussion of correlation.

Lung cancer and smoking seemed to be the pair generally chosen by the better candidates with health and diet often chosen by the weaker candidates. In the latter case, the essay was often about a suitable diet which, whilst knowledgeable, was not an adequate response to this question.

Some candidates were able to successfully bring their personal experience to bear on the examination success and homework pair of factors.

Question 2.5

This question provided A level biologists with an opportunity to show their social responsibility. Many were able to this very well with specialist knowledge of e.g. insulin production being well demonstrated for the benefit of the intelligent general reader. Again, good responses had a wide range of issues with sound and detailed underpinning knowledge used in developing these issues.

A weakness in some responses was the inability to come to a view about where one stood on the scale.

Question 2.6

A popular question with the best responses offering a wide range of our decision and actions which may lead to the decline and extinction of other species. As well as a catalogue of environmental

problems that affect other species, hunting (woolly mammoths, the dodo, elephants, lions, whales) and eating animals figured prominently.

Weaker responses did not have this wide range and the ozone (often spelt incorrectly as o-zone) layer and global warming were often conflated. The second part of this question was often ignored or treated superficially.

GSA6 Society, Politics and the Economy

General Comments

Although a full range of marks was shown to be achievable on the paper, the average level of performance was modest and disappointing, given that in principle candidates had ample opportunity to prepare the source material prior to the test. The topic was felt to be accessible and close enough to candidates' own experience to have some personal meaning, but too many gave the impression of having done little effective preparation or insufficient capacity to come to terms with the amount of material.

In this synoptic test, candidates must above all be able to summarise and/or evaluate each of the documents, and effectively understand and synthesise their relationship to each other, as the questions can be more or less guaranteed to focus on these skills. A process for preparing for the test is described in the Teachers' Guide, issued with the original Specification, and all candidates would do well to follow this rigorously.

It must also be said that advice to make the length of answers match the number of marks for each question had not, in a great many cases, either been given or heeded. Many wrote far more than necessary, and consequently spent too much time, on Questions 1, 2 and 3, worth only 16 marks in total, and in many cases not enough on Questions 4, 5 and the Essay, worth 44 in total.

It should have been well within the compass of the great majority to build a solid mark base in answering Questions 1, 2 and 3. Modest marks on the remaining document questions and the essay should then have produced a mark somewhere in the mid 20s or above. Too often this was not the case and some of those who did score well on the earlier questions wrote far more than necessary and were consequently unable to devote sufficient time to the questions that remained. A notional rule which candidates might try to follow is that 5 marks require no more than a paragraph of continuous writing and/or an appropriate number of specific points to reflect the number of marks.

Answers to the essay questions were mostly disappointing. Some were simply far too short, although this may have reflected the extent of the candidate's knowledge and/or lack of time. Most were longer but only rarely did they focus on the main demands of the question or show the capacity to think analytically and in a way that suggested a measure of reflective thought and ability to deal more conceptually with abstract ideas. Only a relatively small minority could combine the knowledge, understanding and skills to reach Levels 4 and 5.

Weak expression, inadequate syntax, grammar and punctuation were less in evidence than at AS level, but words which continued to be commonly misspelt, despite many of them appearing in the text or questions, were:

a lot, argument, bias(ed), business, compromise, convenience, criticism, environment, integrate(d), interest, must/should have, legitimate, lose (as opposed to loose), moral, opinion, politicians, policies, privatise/-ation, pursue, representative, vehicle.

Section A Case Study

Question 1

This question focused on Extract A and so many aims were acceptable that it was almost impossible not to pick up at least some marks, although some candidates confused aims (e.g. reducing congestion) with measures (e.g. road pricing). Assessments were sometimes less successful, either because they were not sufficiently clear ('integrated transport' for example was often not explained sufficiently in the candidate's own words) or because they ended up discussing aims which were different from those initially identified. Almost all answers, good or bad, were too long – sometimes excessively so. A phrase each for the aims, plus three sentences explaining why they were appropriate was all that was needed to secure full marks.

Question 2

Relatively few candidates identified all four 'restrictive' measures which had majority support and it was much more common for candidates to hit on two correctly (by accident?) often accompanied by 'road pricing' or 'traffic calming'. Failure to recognise where to find the information in Extract B, what was genuinely 'restrictive', or weakness in data handling skills may have led many candidates to 'common sense' measures rather than to those that commanded majority support, which could only be obtained with precision from the survey data. Candidates who claimed that the chosen measures would enable motorists to continue to drive unimpeded in towns and cities were felt to miss the point. Once again, most answers were far longer than they needed to be.

Question 3

By this stage, answers were starting to become shorter and most candidates were able to make a limited number of basic contrasts between the two surveys. Unfortunately, though some suggested that the AA survey was likely to be 'bias' (sic), many had little idea how to deal with a fundamental concept like 'validity', on the need to focus on the nature and origin of the extracts and data, so that Level 3 answers were fairly rare.

Question 4

Those who had done some preparatory work on the extracts were usually able to reach at least a Level 2 mark on this question. Few, though, reached Level 3 usually because the range of their answer was restricted (usually to electric cars and road pricing schemes from Extract E) when a wider response was needed. Those who had not prepared well, either wrote very short answers or continued at length, sometimes not mentioning a single example of anything that resembled 'new technology'.

Question 5

It was not uncommon to see this question either omitted entirely or abbreviated and left unfinished as candidates realised that time was against them. There were some considered examples which distributed responsibility between those who wanted unlimited use of cars and good public transport without ever thinking of the costs, and successive governments who had mismanaged transport in a variety of ways. Most concentrated on a blanket condemnation of the government, comparing Labour unfavourably with its European counterparts. Such answers often ignored alternatives, but more thoughtful responses were often quite imaginative in environmentally led, but politically unreachable suggestions.

Section B Essay

Question 6

This was quite a popular question but rarely well done. Strike action, particularly by railway or postal workers, was widely condemned and few recognised or wished to acknowledge the rights of workers in any detail. Freedom of speech and ‘last resort’ were mentioned more often but it was usually accompanied by either vague references to, or lengthy narratives on, protests by groups such as tanker drivers, environmentalists and animal rights activists, which almost always reflected ‘public’ opinion. Far too often, demonstrations, strikes and ‘direct action’ were treated as a single phenomenon and very few looked in detail at the concept of legitimacy, although some drew the distinction between civil disobedience and violent actions which were usually illegal. Knowledge of the law on such matters as industrial action and assembly, and references to alternative courses of action to protest would have been helpful. Governments were felt to be responsible for everything, as opposed to employers, and were urged to listen and compromise to solve the problems, although some simply said that all protestors should be arrested.

Question 7

Many of those who answered this question were able to list the advantages and disadvantages of privatisation, and thus gain Level 2 or 3 marks, although some failed to use a range of examples which would have provided the theory with a context and reached Levels 4 or 5. The general feeling was that services such as gas, electricity, water and telephones should continue to be privately run because of the elements of choice and competition, but that buses, and particularly the railways, should be taken back into public ownership. Much was sometimes made of the advantages of such a move and only a small number were able to point out the potential costs and criticisms made of the nationalised industries before the ‘heady’ days of privatisation in the 1980s.

Question 8

This was easily the least popular essay question and almost invariably the refuge of weak candidates. Most answers were based on vague and fragmented lists of what were assumed to be rights and responsibilities until, usually at a relatively early stage, the ideas ran out. It was very disappointing that so few had any grasp of even the most rudimentary philosophical ideas or even fundamental differences between rights and responsibilities under the law and their counterparts in a moral and social code.

Question 9

This was usually the best answered of the essay questions and a likely favourite of those with a background in geography, economics and politics. Some answers displayed a good knowledge of big business and international corporations and indicated both the contribution they could make, particularly to the economies of LEDCs, and the power that this allowed them to wield. The regulation of the activities of such companies received rather less attention although some used the Microsoft case to illustrate how difficult it was for governments to succeed in limiting or encouraging the activities of businesses which had the power both to contribute to the success of and inflict damage on even the economies of MEDCs. Some successfully discussed the way that politicians and business leaders work together, either ethically or unethically, and others, equally validly, assessed power in terms of cultural influences. Even though governments had the advantage of law-making powers, it was often recognised that successful enforcement on a world, or even European basis, was very difficult.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
GSA1	50	50	26.2	6.9
GSA2	50	50	27.4	8.6
GA3W	50	50	20.0	6.5
GA3C	50	50	31.8	9.3
GA4F	50	50	26.3	7.2
GA4G	50	50	22.7	7.5
GA4S	50	50	25.6	8.0
GSA5	50	50	28.0	7.1
GSA6	60	60	25.6	8.2

For units which contain only one component, scaled marks are the same as raw marks.

GSA1 (34585 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	31	28	25	23	21
Uniform Boundary Mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

GSA2 (34074 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	33	29	26	23	20
Uniform Boundary Mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

GA3W (35129 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	25	22	19	17	15
Uniform Boundary Mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

GA3C (751 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	38	34	30	27	24
Uniform Boundary Mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Advanced Subsidiary Award

Provisional statistics for the award (29776 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	18.8	36.3	55.0	72.1	86.1

GA4F (17500 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	32	29	26	24	22
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

GA4G (6886 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	29	26	23	21	19
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

GA4S (2123 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	32	29	26	23	21
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

GSA5 (26578 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	50	34	31	28	25	23
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

GSA6 (27660 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	33	30	27	24	22
Uniform Boundary Mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Advanced Award

Provisional statistics for the award (27583 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	16.7	35.3	56.5	76.6	91.5

Definitions

Boundary Mark: the minimum (scaled) mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

Mean Mark: is the sum of all candidates' marks divided by the number of candidates. In order to compare mean marks for different components, the mean mark (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Standard Deviation: a measure of the spread of candidates' marks. In most components, approximately two-thirds of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean, and approximately 95% of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean. In order to compare the standard deviations for different components, the standard deviation (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Uniform Mark: a score on a standard scale which indicates a candidate's performance. The lowest uniform mark for grade A is always 80% of the maximum uniform mark for the unit, similarly grade B is 70%, grade C is 60%, grade D is 50% and grade E is 40%. A candidate's total scaled mark for each unit is converted to a uniform mark and the uniform marks for the units which count towards the AS or A-level qualification are added in order to determine the candidate's overall grade.

Objective Test Keys

AS Units

GSA1 Qu. 1	
1.1	D
1.2	B
1.3	D
1.4	A
1.5	A
1.6	C
1.7	D
1.8	A
1.9	B
1.10	A
1.11	B
1.12	C
1.13	B
1.14	C
1.15	C
1.16	B
1.17	D
1.18	C
1.19	A
1.20	B
1.21	A
1.22	C
1.23	D
1.24	B
1.25	D

GSA2 Sect. 1	
1	B
2	A
3	B
4	B
5	D
6	C
7	D
8	C
9	B
10	D
11	B
12	D
13	C
14	C
15	A
16	A
17	D
18	D
19	A
20	B
21	D
22	A
23	D
24	D
25	A

GSA2 Sect. 2	
26	C
27	C
28	B
29	C
30	B
31	C
32	C
33	C
34	D
35	D
36	A
37	A
38	A
39	C
40	A
41	B
42	B
43	A
44	D
45	D
46	A
47	B
48	B
49	B
50	A

Objective Test Keys

A2 Units

GA4F French	
1.1	B
1.2	D
1.3	A
1.4	C
1.5	B
1.6	D
1.7	A
1.8	D
1.9	B
1.10	A
1.11	D
1.12	A
1.13	C
1.14	A
1.15	D
1.16	B
1.17	C
1.18	C
1.19	B
1.20	D
1.21	D
1.22	A
1.23	C
1.24	B
1.25	D

GA4G German	
1.1	A
1.2	B
1.3	A
1.4	C
1.5	D
1.6	C
1.7	B
1.8	B
1.9	A
1.10	D
1.11	C
1.12	A
1.13	B
1.14	C
1.15	A
1.16	C
1.17	A
1.18	B
1.19	D
1.20	D
1.21	C
1.22	A
1.23	B
1.24	A
1.25	D

GA4S Spanish	
1.1	B
1.2	C
1.3	A
1.4	C
1.5	D
1.6	B
1.7	A
1.8	A
1.9	C
1.10	B
1.11	B
1.12	C
1.13	A
1.14	D
1.15	C
1.16	C
1.17	B
1.18	B
1.19	D
1.20	A
1.21	D
1.22	A
1.23	C
1.24	C
1.25	A

GSA5 Qu. 1	
1.1	C
1.2	B
1.3	D
1.4	B
1.5	A
1.6	B
1.7	D
1.8	C
1.9	C
1.10	C
1.11	B
1.12	B
1.13	C
1.14	A
1.15	B
1.16	B
1.17	C
1.18	C
1.19	B
1.20	D
1.21	C
1.22	A
1.23	D
1.24	C
1.25	D