

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/12
Written Exam

Key messages

Candidates generally ensured that they read the paper carefully, looking at the key words, to answer all the questions. This applied throughout; in **Question 1** most candidates were able to identify three negative impacts of a rise in sea-level and many explained at least one of them. The focus in **Question 2** was almost completely on the evidence with only occasional digression into unlinked commentary on argument. Most candidates responded to the idea of how convincing the arguments were in **Question 3**. It is pleasing to see the improvement from previous series in this regard.

Some candidates wrote extensively for **Question 1**, where there were relatively few marks available. This may have impacted on the thinking and writing time for **Question 3** but there was no evidence of candidates running out of time.

To gain higher marks in **Questions 2** and **3** there should be clear development of the points made. This may relate to the impact of material in the documents on the evidence and the arguments. It may also show consideration of, not just **what** a strength or weakness may be, but also **how** or **why** it is a strength or weakness. There should also be explicit reference to the documents in **Question 3** and reflection on the impact of the evidence in **Question 2**.

So, candidates should provide brief and relevant references from the documents to support their evaluation of evidence and argument. Otherwise, the answer is generalised, containing only assertions or claims. They should also explain what impact this has on the argument or chosen evidence which goes beyond a generic statement like 'weakens/strengthens'. They need to explain how the assessment does this.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content. The candidates need to focus on an evaluation of the provenance, perspectives, evidence and argument to reach an overall judgement as to whether one of the documents was more convincing than the other.

Candidates will not gain credit for using material from their own knowledge that is not mentioned in the documents. Equally, copying sections from the documents, without reference, except when asked to identify in **Question 1**, will not gain credit.

General comments

Many candidates answered in a structured way approaching different aspects of evidence (particularly in **Question 2**) and argument in **Question 3**.

It was encouraging to see some candidates applying a higher-level skill by comparing the arguments put forward in the documents in **Question 3**. Those giving intermediate judgements were most successful.

The length of answers was generally appropriate for the number of marks available, although some were over long in **Question 1**. No candidate appeared to run out of time but may have had less preparation and writing time to fully answer **Question 3**. The most effective approach to **Question 1** (worth 6 marks) was to provide 3 separate paragraphs (with identification and explanation) as this gave good structure. There was limited evidence of planning for the longer questions. If it had been included, a better structure of assessment and judgement could have been achieved.

Some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise references to the documents. In **Question 3** stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents and evaluated their significance and impact on the argument. This demonstrated that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being presented.

The rubric of the paper requires candidates to write in continuous prose. In **Questions 2** and **3** full paragraphing in an essay format, rather than bullet points, should be used. In **Question 1** as the question required 'identify and explain', short paragraphs were best for each of the three approaches.

Most candidates appeared to be well-prepared with clear understanding of the aspects of evidence and argument that they were looking for in the documents and answered in a structured way.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

As an 'Identify and Explain three negative impacts...' question, **Question 1** required candidates to create their own structure for their answer. This was best done by creating a separate paragraph (including both identification and explanation) for each approach. **Question 1** provides encouragement to candidates to fully read and digest the detail of **Document 1**. The key words in the question refer to the negative impacts of a rise in sea-level.

The question required candidates to identify and explain three negative impacts of a rise in sea-level. The impact referred to the consequences of the rise in sea-level, like 'land loss due to beach erosion', not what caused it. So, reference to 'temperatures rising by 2°C' was not creditable.

Candidates scored one mark for a basic, correct identification that could be quoted from the text, for example, 'homes could be destroyed' or 'freshwater supplies could be contaminated by salt water' for each of three impacts. For the explanation mark there was a need to reflect the author's thoughts and meaning without introducing the candidate's only knowledge. It is also expected that the answer should be in the candidate's own words or a paraphrase of those of the author – not directly copied from the document. However, correct synthesis of the author's words from different parts of the document were creditworthy.

This example shows information taken from paragraph 6 and 4 and then interpreted and rephrased by the candidate.

'Land loss due to beach erosion (I) is a problem as it can impact on agriculture, which is a source of income for the island people, as it means there is less land for growing crops so people may have to move...(E).'

Another example of a two-mark answer is:

'.....rising sea-levels threaten to flood houses (I) and buildings near the coast. This could displace the inhabitants of these buildings causing them to have to move to higher ground (E).'

It was not appropriate to refer to details such as: 'Global warming is causing severe beach erosions as water level rises due to increased temperatures.' The beach erosion was not linked to loss of land and the explanation was about the rise in sea level not the consequences of land loss.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered with candidates correctly assessing the evidence rather than simply the argument. It was pleasing to see in **Question 2** that candidates had generally read the requirements of the question carefully. The question required an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the evidence used by the author.

The highest achieving candidates recognised that the author used a range of supporting evidence including first-hand (primary) evidence through her travels in the Maldives. They also recognised the appropriate use of sources, for example, the Paris Agreement and used relevant examples, like Hithaadhoo. Higher scoring candidates recognised evidence, named appropriate examples, and explained why they showed evidence as a strength. This three stage approach tends to lead to higher marks.

For weaknesses, higher scoring candidates saw that there were some unsupported details, for example mentioning low lying island nations without naming them and providing no source for the information. Also, the statistics were vague with reference to 'by several metres' not being specified and 12 000 coral islands being a rounded figure. Higher scoring candidates explained how both limitations had a negative impact on the reliability of the evidence.

The difference between higher and moderately scoring candidates was usually defined by the appropriate explanation of the strengths and weaknesses, not just identifying them, or not referencing the document. Moderately scoring candidates made basic statements and explained or developed them. Higher scoring candidates made statements, explained and developed them with reference to the impact of the argument.

In an 'evidence' question the provenance of the document and the credibility of the author is only relevant when it shows the author's ability to research and select appropriate evidence.

For strengths of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'...Hussain uses globally renowned sources such as the IPCC and a quote from a NASA scientist. To show how pressing the impact of rising global warming is, the author uses numerical data such as '1.5°C by 2040' to make it more understandable for the reader and helps to see the comparison when she says 'over 2°C.'

This example shows how the candidate has addressed the sources of evidence, explained the significance of the sources and given examples from the document.

'The author provides evidence to support most of her claims and arguments. The author especially strengthens the evidence by providing personal anecdotes of her and her son's visits to a Maldivian island. By doing this she sets up her expertise [and personal knowledge] of the impact of climate change in the Maldives. This makes the evidence she provides overall strong.'

For weaknesses of the evidence the highest achieving candidates used examples such as:

'There are many statements that are not backed up with evidence. For example, Hussain asserts that 'many low-lying island nations and coastal communities are already experiencing the impacts of climate change' Then she continues talking about different types of impacts like land loss, displacement of people...However she does not use any quantitative and qualitative evidence to present these types of impacts. These unsupported statements make the argument weaker as we are not sure if they are true'.

'Although first-hand experience gives the reader a better understanding of the problems in the country it can also be unreliable as there is a chance the author is biased. She may be biased because it is her home country that is being severely affected. In order to save the place where she grew up, she may overstate some facts. There is a vested interest because her argument that something should immediately be done about climate change will help her restore/save her home country. Selecting evidence to give a biased view shows a weakness.'

Question 3

The most frequent approach was to directly compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two documents throughout the answer looking at their different perspectives. The strongest candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each document and by using intermediate judgements. There was no correct answer and candidates were free to argue that Document 2 was more convincing than Document 1 or the opposite. It was possible to argue that neither was more convincing. In all cases candidates were required to justify their final judgement.

Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g., the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence provided. Candidates achieving the highest marks gave clear examples from the documents and their impact on the overall assessment, while lower scoring answers simply relied on a formulaic approach of what should constitute a strong argument without using supporting examples. Such answers were consequently superficial and relied, at best, on undeveloped quotes from the text.

The strongest responses adopted a structured response to answering the question: methodically evaluating the relative strengths of the argument (with intermediate judgements), using appropriate examples and analysis of impact, before coming to a reasoned judgment at the end.

Examples of strong evaluation of the arguments are:

Provenance:

This is an example of an approach reflecting the relative strengths of the authors -

'The author of Document 1 is the former deputy ambassador of the Maldives to the UN. Thus, gives Hussain access to a variety of sources where she can research and select accurate information about climate change, hence making her argument believable. She also has the ability to observe the situation of how climate change affects the Maldives, which gives her personal understanding of the effects in her own country. On the other hand, the author of Document 2, Naughten, is an ocean modeller at the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge, UK. This could give her a slight expertise regarding oceans which strengthens her argument.'

Some candidates assumed that as Hussain's article was published on Media Network, Aljazeera that this was more reliable than Naughten's professional blog. Scientists in the 21st century often write in professional blogs and their arguments may be peer-reviewed in much the same way a media outlet would fact check information. Higher scoring candidates would put forward a reasoned argument that, for example, Aljazeera was considered a more reliable place to publish than a professional, scientific blog. Lower scoring candidates were quick to assert that a (professional) blog is unreliable (perhaps incorrectly) without any supporting evidence or reasoning.

Many candidates dismissed the argument of Naughten in Document 2 as it was a personal view on the impact of climate change, not on geographical surroundings but on the work, thinking and research of scientists. Few understood the nuance of these different perspectives.

Judgement – many candidates gave intermediate judgements and concluded with a brief summary. An alternative approach was to evaluate the argument of each document in turn and then give a reasoned conclusion to make a judgement. This approach is acceptable but tends to be less effective than direct evaluation and judgement of different aspects of argument. If it is well argued a candidate could decide that Doc 1 is more convincing than Doc 2, or Doc 2 is more convincing than Doc 1, or they are equally convincing.

This example is the conclusion to an answer that made intermediate judgements throughout.

'After having compared both sources I have come to the conclusion that Document 1 is more convincing than Document 2. While Document 2 presents arguments that are potentially useful in other contexts, such as the lives of scientists, it is not particularly appealing to the issue of climate change, especially when compared to the source written by a native looking for change.'

Some candidates followed a formulaic approach to the answer by looking for particular aspects of the argument to consider. Generally, this was well done with higher scoring candidates linking aspects to examples in the text and with explanation of why this supported the argument. A small number made assumptions based on preconceived ideas about what makes a good argument, rather than reading and evaluating the documents clearly. Candidates are required to engage critically with the documents, rather than make generalised comments that could apply to any document.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/02 Essay

Key messages

- Candidates should draw upon research from globally diverse publications. The source material used to inform the essay should emanate from different geographical regions.
- Synthesis of research material is the key to developing coherent perspectives. Learners should make links between their source materials demonstrating how one piece of research corroborates or builds upon a previous piece of research.
- Candidates should consider carefully the title question of their essay. They should devise a question that will enable them to develop a debate between globally contrasting perspectives.

General comments

Much of the work seen by examiners was of good quality and demonstrated engagement with a range of global topics. Popular topics that enabled candidates to develop contrasting perspectives included Biodiversity, Climate change, Rise of global superpowers and Tourism, amongst others. There is a list of topics published in the syllabus. Understandably many candidates used the context of the Covid-19 pandemic to inform their essays. This was perfectly legitimate.

Global Perspectives and Research is a skills-based course and in completing the Essay component candidates are assessed against seven different criteria. All the criteria have equal weighting. Addressing all of the assessment criteria within the word count requires candidates to plan their essays carefully. It remains the case that some essays omitted to address all the criteria. Two key omissions were critical evaluation of source material and the development of globally contrasting perspectives.

This Principal Examiner Report for Teachers will consider four broad areas of assessment: Perspectives, Sources, Conclusions and Communication. Condensing the seven different assessment criteria into these broader areas of focus will address the interplay between them. It should also enable teachers to see some of the areas where improvements would be welcome as well as examples of successful practice from this series.

Perspectives

The syllabus defines perspectives as a coherent world view which is a response to an issue. The candidate needs to develop two perspectives, each of which responds to the chosen issue in a contrasting manner. The vast majority of candidates successfully set up a debate between two contrasting perspectives.

Choice of title is key to success here. '*Is Foreign Aid Beneficial for the Recipient Countries?*' is a title that enabled the candidate to develop contrasting perspectives that responded to the issue of foreign aid. The title also offers the opportunity to use globally diverse arguments, evidence and context to build globally contrasting perspectives.

A title such as, '*Should Indian Courts Practice Judicial Activism?*' is very specific and likely to locate the debate in a single geographic context. Candidates that develop contrasting perspectives but without a global dimension cannot achieve higher levels at criteria **Empathy for Perspectives** and **Globality of**

Perspectives. Using source material that pertains to different geographical contexts is an important skill that candidates should address.

A title such as, '*The Rise of the Patriarchy and the Social Groups Responsible for its Deep-Seeded (sic) Existence*' suggests no discernible debate. Such a title is likely to lead to an informative and descriptive essay rather than a debate between contrasting perspectives.

Global Perspectives and Research encourages candidates to engage with perspectives that may challenge their preconceived ideas. When writing their essays candidates must remain objective and give each perspective a fair hearing. They should be balanced and empathetic when presenting each perspective. Candidates do sometimes find this difficult, particularly when they choose an emotive issue such as animal testing. It is important that candidates research an issue that they can approach with an open mind.

The definition of perspectives outlined above made mention of 'a coherent world view'. Candidates need to make links between source materials; making it clear how one source supports or corroborates another source. Some candidates still look at each source in isolation. In order to develop perspectives, candidates should synthesise their research material into coherent perspectives.

This can be seen in the following example:

Gardner's (2018) argument that biodiversity has increased in Latin America is supported by the points made by Grayson (2020). Grayson found similar evidence in her study of biodiversity in South East Asia. Similar findings from two globally diverse studies increases the strength of the perspective and allows wider generalisations to be made.

This candidate clearly demonstrates the synthesis of evidence and argument into a unified and coherent perspective.

Source Material

There are two different global dimensions the candidates should consider. The first one, already mentioned above, is the concept of globally contrasting perspectives. The example reproduced above showed a candidate synthesising argument and evidence pertaining to South East Asia and South America. If the contrasting perspective was informed by argument and evidence pertaining to Europe and Africa, then clearly the perspectives would have global contrast.

The other global dimension candidates should consider is the provenance of their source material. Global Perspectives and Research assesses the candidate's ability to draw upon a wide range of research material. Candidates must support their perspectives with evidence and arguments emanating from reliable and relevant sources. To reach higher attainment levels candidates should gather their source material from publications with a range of global provenance. A successful candidate from this series used articles from The European Journal of International Relations, The Deccan Chronicle (India), The Jakarta Post and The New Yorker. These are all credible sources with globally diverse provenance.

Having selected their source materials, the next requirement for candidates is to demonstrate their understanding of the selected material. Having read and analysed their research material, the candidate needs to be able to present the arguments emanating from the source in a logical and coherent manner. It is fine for the candidate to use quotations that are thoughtfully selected to support their essays. However, overreliance on extended quotations is not an effective way to demonstrate understanding.

This short extract from a successful essay demonstrates strong understanding of source material. The candidate is clearly in control of their material and is able to effectively use quotations and synthesise arguments.

Another article, 'Can the pandemic shutdown teach South Asia about air pollution?' by Syed Muhammad Abubakar and Anita Anand supports the perspective of the pandemic's positive impacts arguing that the situation at hand provides an ideal stage for transboundary collaboration and explains how countries can effectively combat the pandemic and solve the crisis of air pollution. They start with a statement from Bharati Chaturvedi regarding the world's new normal, "We need to take advantage of that, and enforce, even accelerate, some policy shifts . . . as those exposed to air pollution are more vulnerable."

Having initially selected and analysed relevant and globally diverse sources and then demonstrated their understanding of the research material in a coherent and controlled manner the candidates are expected to subject their material to critical evaluation. In essence the candidate should demonstrate why the source is worthy of being used but also acknowledge any weaknesses it may contain.

Very few candidates omitted this aspect in their research essays this series. However, some candidates remain assertive in their critical evaluation.

His experience as a sportsperson gives him an understanding of the social pressures a player faces.

Here the candidate is not demonstrating the impact of their critical evaluation on the argument or evidence presented.

Candidates should try and evaluate why a particular source is considered suitable.

It also strengthens the reasoning because the multiple scientific studies that are cited as evidence are published in peer-reviewed journals. This means that other people have vetted the procedure in which the results were obtained and assessed the reliability of the conclusion.

Candidates must strike a balance when critically evaluating their research material. Too much emphasis on critical evaluation will not give the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate understanding, whereas limited or no critical evaluation will prevent candidates from reaching higher levels. Candidates should evaluate at least two sources, one from each side of the debate. They should try and use a range of criteria when doing so. This could be the use of evidence, vested interest, author credibility, logic of argument, balance or provenance amongst many other possible areas for critical evaluation.

Conclusions

Candidate conclusions should be supported and reflective. Conclusions should also outline suggestions for further research that could be considered in the light of the candidate's judgement.

A supported conclusion should link explicitly back to the question posed in the title and should follow on logically from the debate that has been presented. The candidates should have presented a balanced debate between two contrasting perspectives and the conclusion is their opportunity to evaluate the merits of the debate and offer a final judgement.

In this example, the candidate's conclusion is thoughtful and follows on logically from the debate presented in the essay. It is clear the candidate is weighing up the perspectives as they move toward a considered conclusion.

In conclusion, the coronavirus pandemic has improved the state of pollution and carbon emission levels worldwide, but these effects are temporary and there are many irreversible changes that are taking place during this time such as the endangerment of various species due to poaching and the sudden rise in demand and consumption of single-use plastic which is ending up back in nature. Therefore, the pandemic has not had a positive impact on the world's biosphere and although there are observations that we can use in the future, we must first focus on reversing the effects that the lockdown has had on wildlife and the environment.

Candidates are increasingly offering reflective conclusions and this is an important element of a successful conclusion. Some candidates are a little descriptive in their reflection and simply describe their learning journey. Higher achieving candidates will address more directly how the engagement with contrasting perspectives has had an impact on their viewpoint.

The final thing to consider in the conclusion is a suggestion for further research. To reach the higher levels candidates should develop a specific focus for further research that emanates directly from their research experience.

Some limitations of my research and this field are that there is no conclusive evidence about the threat AI could pose . . . this realm has not been explored yet so there is little information to go by as the application is still only used in minor areas. To improve my research I could learn about the current research in the field and expert predictions of where AI will take us . . . further research could yield more insight into the possibilities of AI in the future and what government and private developers predict.

Communication

Most candidates were successful in communicating a logical and coherent debate. To reach the higher attainment levels for this criterion, candidates need to structure their essays effectively. The use of discursive markers to guide the reader through the essay is a good way to do this. Successful candidates used discursive markers such as: firstly, secondly or finally to show the order of ideas. Many candidates were able to indicate the start of a new perspective using discursive markers such as: however, alternatively or on the other hand.

Finally, candidates must offer full referencing of their source material via citations and a bibliography. Candidates should not bolster their bibliographies by reproducing the bibliographies presented in their source material. Only sources that the candidate has researched themselves should be referenced.

For referencing to be considered effective, it should be consistent and functional, this means that the relationship between citation and the bibliography is readily discernible. If a candidate uses a footnote system such as the Oxford Referencing System, the footnotes should not be used to add additional explanatory material. Candidates should only use footnotes to cite the research material used.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/03
Team Project: Presentation and
Reflective Paper

Key messages

The definition of the issue should be supported by specific and detailed evidence.

Candidates should develop and justify the differences between their own perspective and those of others.

Solutions should be supported by evidence within the conclusion and this should be used to justify their effectiveness.

Visual aids should be referred to in support of specific points with the argument of the presentation.

Reflective papers are more effective when they use specific examples to support their evaluation of collaboration and reflection on learning.

General comments

This session saw a range of engaging work exploring a variety of problems and solutions. This report highlights some key aspects of both the presentations and reflective papers, giving examples of how candidates showed effective achievement in these.

Comments on individual presentations

Definition of the Issue

Candidates defined their team's issue most successfully when this was led by research into specific evidence, and then developed this logically in unfolding each aspect of how it operated and why it was significant. For example, a presentation on reducing crime through rehabilitation started by outlining rates of criminal recidivism in a range of individual countries, before providing further evidence of the rates in India and its particular problems with prison overcrowding, before giving further statistics about the rates of specific crimes in their own city. Another presentation focused on the problem of food waste and began with a definition of what this is in its various aspects before outlining how much food is wasted annually globally and in India and the US, also explaining what these figures are as a proportion of the total supply of food. In both cases, a definition of the issue worked in combination with detailed and specifically evidenced research in order to make it clear to the audience what the problem was.

Differentiation of Perspectives

Only a small minority of candidates did not refer to alternative perspectives either from their research or from other members of their team. A larger number minimally met the requirements of this criterion by stating their own perspective and contrasting this with the other members of their team (usually by listing their perspectives). Some more successful candidates moved beyond this by explaining the differences between their approach and that taken by the other members of the team and in some cases evaluating these (i.e. setting out why their perspective was a stronger one, or fitted the available evidence more securely). The most successful presentations sustained this in different parts of the presentation, coming back to the differences between their own perspective and others at a variety of key points in their presentation in order to include this as part of their argument.

Conclusion and Solution

Presentations with effective solutions developed these hand-in-hand with their conclusion as the final step of their presentation. This meant that the solution itself was firmly based on a variety of different kinds of evidence and this evidence was linked back specifically to the sources of evidence used to explain and justify the problem. In this way, there was a firm link between the issue, why it was a problem, and how the solution would solve this. Solutions which worked well also used the logical development of evidence to not only clearly set out what the solution was, but also to demonstrate its effectiveness in solving or reducing the problem. For example, another presentation on the problem of food waste set out food labelling as its effective solution. It began by setting out sequentially how the labelling would work, the different kinds of labelling and their purpose. Following this, it explained the benefits of the system and provided specific examples of the problems with food waste which would be solved by this system of labelling, thereby demonstrating its effectiveness. For example, *'standardized date labelling, while preventing significant amount of food wastage with consumers it will also prevent food loss at the retail level by clear indication of shelf life so that businesses can establish better inventory management guidelines which will increase the length of time a retailer is able to maintain their stock. This will increase the number of products they can sell'*.

Presentational Skills

The majority of candidates in this session presented live, although a significant minority delivered their slides using Teams or other videoconferencing software. Either approach was acceptable. Presentations were effective where the candidate's argument made direct use of the visual information contained in their slides or other visual aids. For example, some candidates made specific reference to graphs or diagrams, and picked out elements of these to support points they were making. The most effective presentations did this throughout, coming back to graphs, charts, images or other visual information at multiple points in their presentation in order to provide additional evidence or other reinforcement for what they were saying.

Reflective Paper

The majority of candidates did succeed in evaluating the quality of collaboration within their team and the degree to which they had learned as part of doing their team project. This meant that they identified strengths and/or weaknesses of collaboration and specific things which they had learnt, using this to make a judgement on the effectiveness of their collaboration or the extent of their learning. Reflective papers which went beyond this were more specific in the evidence they were able to offer in support of their overall judgements. The following is an example of this for the evaluation of collaboration:

'By the time I joined in, my new groupmate had already worked out a basic outline for the project which he had chosen. ... Initially I felt slightly reluctant to contribute much to the planning and discussion as I was unfamiliar with the topic, but with encouragement from my subject tutor I was eventually able to link my familiarity with the perspective in general with the topic at hand. ... Due to our inability to have any non-virtual interactions I acknowledge that it was a consistent challenge to collaborate. To overcome the problem of differences in scheduling we each agreed to go our own separate ways to do research but then to regroup to discuss our group solution.'

Candidates were most successful in evaluating their learning when they were specific about what they had learnt. For example: *'I learnt about the harmful effects food waste had on the world. Previously I had thought that food waste is bad because it prevents the poor from getting food, however I never considered that food waste also wastes the resources used in its production.'*

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/04
Research Report

General comments

- The evaluation of evidence and arguments should be at the heart of the reports
- There is a distinction between describing the content of research materials and analysing them in terms of the issue in the question
- If specialised technical topics are chosen, the material must be presented to a non-specialist audience, in a clearly comprehensible way and used in support of clearly expressed perspectives

There was much careful research and most logs reflected an engagement with the process and thought about how material could be used. Only a few logs were predominantly descriptive. Most reports engaged with some discussion, but the significance of ‘perspectives’ was not always understood. This term refers to the different overall outlooks and views about an issue. Thus if, say, euthanasia and its legalisation is the issue, then there may be different aspects or themes – legal, religious, medical, social, but the essential task is to explain the evidence supporting different overall views about legalisation and evaluate that evidence to reach a supported conclusion. Subheadings identifying the ‘legal perspective’ or ‘the medical perspective’ did not always prove helpful and led some reports to be over descriptive of views without assessing them. Similarly, long accounts of the content of evidence collected tended to lead to too much description, not all of which was always linked to the actual topic. To take euthanasia again as an example, several pages outlining what the legal position in different countries under a heading ‘The Legal perspective’ did not really engage with the task of establishing key arguments and evidence supporting different possible positions. Background information was sometimes given undue prominence and, in some technical topics, description of some very complex and specialist information was included at the expense of supported argument.

Once again, it might be helpful to explain that the Cambridge Research Report is intended to extend the skills learnt and practised in the previous components. It is not intended to be a stand-alone piece of academic research which conveys knowledge or describes evidence. Instead, it is intended to show the ability of learners to analyse different perspectives and evaluate the evidence and arguments they contain.

The element of evaluation was not always developed and in some cases was not attempted. Evidence was sometimes taken at face value even when it was questionable. Also, some arguments were not rooted in assessed evidence at all. This is more characteristic of an essay than a report which must be source-based.

The use of a range of criteria to offer clear and sustained evaluation is essential. It follows on from the requirements of a critical analysis of given extracts in Paper 1 and also from the demands of Paper 2. The evaluation in the Cambridge Research Report should be, if anything, more sustained and vigorous as candidates have the experience of developing critical thinking. However, not all reports went beyond the accumulation of material on the topic and there was often little assessment of the chosen sources in the body of the report. A paragraph at the end offering general critical comments is not sufficient and critical evaluation should drive the report and inform the conclusion.

It is that conclusion and consideration of the evidence used and the methodology adopted, that should be the basis of a separate section on Reflection.

Evaluation is not the same as explanation and some marginal comments did not make this distinction. Evaluation requires a distinct judgement about a view and that view should be based on evidence. The nature of the evidence should be considered in the text and the evaluation should go beyond comments on the qualifications of the author. There is very little to be gained, for instance, when assessing differing academic sources to say that the authors are university professors. Higher level evaluation should look at the basis of the evidence. That included surveys and personal research undertaken by the learner. The value of

this research was not always apparent, and some seemed to be done for the sake of drawing up a questionnaire. Similarly, even if experts are asked for their opinion and respond by email or even a personal interview, the evidence they provide still needs to be assessed, just as if it had been obtained from written sources.

There were many positive elements in the work seen. Most of the questions were focused appropriately on topics which could have led to discussion. However, some questions were obscurely worded and the thrust was not clear. Short direct questions with a clear opportunity to discuss different perspectives about a single topic should be the aim. There was a lot of individual research undertaken and the marks given for AO1 Research were generally based on evidence about that. The level of communication was good in itself, but the communication of argument was rather more variable, when too much description and not enough judgement did not lead to a clear supported conclusion. The obvious interest in the work was a strong feature of the work seen. If this could be allied to greater evaluation and more of a sense of personal judgement arising from it, there could be more impressive results in the future. Generally, centres are to be thanked for their support of the qualification and their commitment to an immensely valuable learning experience for their candidates.