

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/11
Paper 11

Key Messages

Content

Candidates should:

- Choose the questions they are going to attempt carefully
- Select topics that they are confident they know about
- Be able to provide examples/illustrations to back up the points made
- Remember that description is not the same as argument
- Use anecdotes and the use of personal experience to support a debate sparingly
- Be precise when expressing disapproval
- Remember that lists need a purpose; when used they should bring to life the argument being developed
- Be careful not to be too assertive
- Be prepared to question, to qualify, to acknowledge other perspectives.

Use of English

Candidates should:

- Leave time to check their English thoroughly to avoid basic errors
- Concentrate on using appropriate vocabulary so expression is fluent and precise
- Ensure that basic sentence structure/grammar is accurate to ensure clear communication of content
- Include varied sentence structures (simple and complex) but be aware that over-long sentences can be clumsy and awkward to read.

General Comments

Most candidates were able to produce two clearly structured essays, often longer than the recommended length. Introductions tended to be quite long but candidates still need to address the key words to indicate that they understand the question. Too many introductions just paraphrased the question. However, many conclusions did arrive at a reasoned, personal assessment avoiding just summarising what had already been stated.

Most responses were successful, answered the question as set and included a variety of examples to illustrate the main points of the essay. Often both essays were long and detailed with good knowledge of local issues and sometimes exhibited an argumentative tone. Occasionally responses were too generalised, offering few or no examples, but still attempted a relevant argument.

It is important that candidates write on topics with which they are familiar and have sufficient knowledge to provide relevant evidence to support points made. Candidates need to spend time studying the chosen question to make sure they understand what is being asked. Although topic knowledge was often thorough and detailed, there was a tendency to present it more as a descriptive list than an evaluative discussion.

When the set question demanded it, candidates usually focused comprehensively on aspects of their own country; however, if this is not the prompt then a broader focus is required. Successful responses demonstrated good topic knowledge and included local, regional and global examples to support points.

The quality of the Use of English was variable. A substantial number of candidates have acquired a wide-ranging English vocabulary but need to improve putting these words into an appropriate context. Grammatical accuracy and correct word order, within a sentence, are essential for the clear communication of content. Generally, spelling and punctuation were of a good standard but candidates could improve their English by checking for basic grammatical errors.

Use of English

Basic errors need to be checked and corrected. Typical errors are listed below:

- Subject/verb non-agreement
- Incorrect use of definite/indefinite article
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Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

This was a very popular question and those candidates who managed to establish a hierarchy of ideal circumstances did well in the crucial matter of evaluation. The circumstances stated and explored were wide and varied. There were thoughtful answers of a philosophical nature which discussed the harm caused by poverty, war, or the various forms of indoctrination. Most of the responses were of a personal nature, and though they may have lacked an analytical edge at times, these were often moving accounts of difficulties occurring in a variety of adverse circumstances. Most of the responses saw the ideal circumstances as those where a balance is struck between indulgence and severity. A small number of candidates opted for the list approach thereby ignoring the key prompt in the question, 'assess'.

Question 2

This was not a very popular question, with approximately one in ten candidates attempting it. Answers tended to focus on clearing up police corruption and having tougher laws. Rehabilitation, not as frequently discussed as it should have been, was covered in a broad sense but the requirement to consider the student's society was not always included. This limited the credit that could be awarded. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of answering the question in full.

Question 3

This was not a widely attempted question but those who answered it produced engaging and enlightening responses. Successful answers defined the criteria for success whereas weaker answers consisted of no more than description. Most candidates had detailed historical knowledge of a variety of revolutions; the French, Russian or American. A few wrote about cultural and scientific revolutions and these were distinctive, unusual, but relevant responses. These candidates saw that revolutions in ideas are not only political, in the commonly understood sense. Some candidates were also able to write convincingly about the Enlightenment or even the Suffragettes.

Question 4

This was a fairly popular question but only the strongest candidates produced good responses. In most instances candidates treated the quotation in the question as an assertion of fact and did not evaluate the statement sufficiently. Candidates needed to give their definitions of the two groups and to state how far they agreed with the statement. Those who clearly identified the difference between skilled and unskilled were

more convincing in their argument and consequently were able to conclude that both the skilled and the academic are essential in society.

Section 2

Question 5

This was a popular choice and successful answers used examples to demonstrate the importance of blogging to impart views and opinions and also to outline the serious dangers that could face a country or an individual due to the unmonitored and free use of blogging sites. Weaker answers failed to maintain a focus on internet blogging, preferring to write a more general account of the use of the internet in everyday life. A number of answers focused on one area only. Often this was the topical area of cyber bullying. Only the strongest candidates managed to reach a conclusion.

Question 6

This question was well answered by those who chose it. Those responses which recognised the importance of 'priority' and 'all nations' were able to produce strong responses because clear arguments were developed concerning the status of conservation when considered against other priorities.

While there were many strong arguments in favour of conservation. The best responses considered the need for conservation and preservation weighed against the fact that some countries and individuals favour other priorities such as defence, education or economic progress.

Question 7

On the whole this question was answered well and candidates showed both knowledge and imagination. All responses acknowledged the relationship between vision and practical realisation, providing specific exemplars to illustrate their points. Examples included public buildings, bridges, various household items, constructions such as the pyramids and temples of antiquity and the drawings of Leonardo Da Vinci. There were also a few attempts to define the sort of calculations necessary to facilitate the professional work of architects and draughtsmen.

Question 8

There were only a few responses to this question and most of them were perceptive, giving reasoned and well thought out answers. Weaker answers addressed only one side of the proposition and did not adequately balance this.

Section 3

Question 9

This was a very popular question and answers were often enlightening and interesting. The strongest answers recognised the variety of superheroes, not just the obvious comic book characters such as Batman or Superman. Several candidates referred to characters from myth and legend and from contemporary film and literature. Rowling and Tolkien's creations were frequently mentioned and even Homer's Odysseus. Analysis was strong in many answers with discussion of what the superhero can offer in terms of security and fulfilment of hopes as role models for the young.

Question 10

Only a few candidates attempted this question and those that were most successful provided examples of books and authors to support their observations. Nearly all of the responses referred to writers who had influenced the candidates' perceptions and their personal writing styles. A few candidates discussed innate

talent but also balanced their comments by recognising that we are influenced by what we have read even if unconsciously. Journalism, biography and autobiography, featured as well as fiction.

Question 11

There were very few responses to this question. Those that attempted it defined 'puppetry' and were able to cite examples, mainly from television.

Question 12

The strongest answers considered both sides of this case and produced balanced answers. A number of candidates discussed only one aspect of the question; the need for censorship in order to protect the public. It was assumed, without debate, that the interests of the public are identical to the interests of the state.

In a number of essays the use of the internet by internationally recognised terror organisations was commonly cited as was its use in the Arab Spring. A few essays deplored censorship altogether on mainly political and artistic grounds.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/12
Paper 12

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Most responses were successful, answered the question as set and included a variety of examples to illustrate the main points of the essay. Often both essays were long and detailed with good knowledge of local issues and sometimes exhibited an argumentative tone. Occasionally responses were too generalised, offering few or no examples, but still attempted a relevant argument.

It is important that candidates write on topics with which they are familiar and have sufficient knowledge to provide relevant evidence to support points made. Candidates need to spend time studying the chosen question to make sure they understand what is being asked. Although topic knowledge was often thorough and detailed, there was a tendency to present it more as a descriptive list than an evaluative discussion.

When the set question demanded it, candidates usually focused comprehensively on aspects of their own country; however, if this is not the prompt then a broader focus is required. Successful responses demonstrated good topic knowledge and included local, regional and global examples to support points.

The quality of the Use of English was variable. A substantial number of candidates have acquired a wide-ranging English vocabulary but need to improve putting these words into an appropriate context. Grammatical accuracy and correct word order, within a sentence, are essential for the clear communication of content. Generally, spelling and punctuation were of a good standard but candidates could improve their English by checking for basic grammatical errors.

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was only chosen by a small number of candidates. More successful responses explored 'to what extent' and commented on issues such as transport safety, protection from thieves and criminals and other safety considerations such as who is responsible for adventure holiday accidents. Many answers concluded that research into a country's culture and danger areas was seen as the responsibility of the individual but that government/tourist information or websites should be regularly up-dated. There was a tendency in weaker answers to focus only on one aspect or to use the question as a travelogue although there was good local knowledge.

Question 2

This was a popular question and many responses gave reasons for unemployment such as lack of industry, government role, over-population, education/skills gap, corruption, use of migrant/cheap labour. Good knowledge was often shown and there was often an assessment rather than just a descriptive list. This was generally a well understood question and the most successful responses covered a range of reasons and then prioritised them.

Question 3

This question was selected by a relatively small number of candidates. Weaker responses tended to just list the effect that government decisions had had on personal lives and covered some unsupported areas such as corrupt election campaigns and popularity of some politicians. More successful answers addressed 'to what extent' and explored such issues as transport, building of new houses, infrastructures, pay increases and job opportunities in the context of decisions made and whether these had improved people's lives or not.

Question 4

There were few responses to this question. The most successful responses considered that there was plenty of evidence of manners and courtesy today and were able to exemplify this. Some argued that these features could be seen as a weakness, as obstructing ambition or enabling exploitation.

Question 5

This question required a good knowledge of a country's energy resources but this was not always demonstrated by candidates. More successful responses were able to comment on a range of countries: from the oil reserves of rich countries like Saudi Arabia to those who attempted to use wind/water power. Such responses also considered those countries which were unable to produce their own energy due to a lack of infrastructure, money or natural resources causing them to be dependent on others.

Question 6

This was a popular question and there were some interesting discussions. Many responses were generalised however without specific exemplification. There were comments about the psychological effects of suffering from a genetic related illness, the relationship between physical and mental health with reference to positive/negative self-image and having the energy to do things effectively and efficiently. More successful responses considered those who abuse their bodies suggesting it was symptomatic of an unhealthy mind but also contemplated the idea that depression and other mental illnesses could be disguised by outwardly appearing healthy.

Question 7

There were some very knowledgeable responses which indicated clearly how a country does or does not use effective farming techniques. Comments ranged from how old fashioned farming machinery is still used within the context of old style farming methods to how modern insecticides and other crop enhancement products are helping with the development of a more modern approach to farming. The most successful responses moved beyond description and evaluated both aspects of the question including how sometimes a landscape of mountains or desert can prohibit farming.

Question 8

This was a very popular question. More successful responses considered the positive educational elements of the internet (how it can be used for research, onscreen tutorials, better assignments, access to all knowledge). They were able to balance this against potential dangers (cheating, over-reliance, distractions of social networks/gaming). The best responses identified a comprehensive range of ideas and provided developed arguments and balance. Some weaker responses generalised about the internet, ignoring 'education' and just focusing on 'dangers'.

Question 9

This was quite a popular choice but responses were often generalised and vague with few supporting examples. Many responses were unclear about what the radio can do suggesting that you needed to use imagination but without any context or linking to a specific programme. There tended to be straightforward ideas about television. A few more successful responses saw television as a source of inspiration for imaginative ideas and visions and used examples from news and drama programmes to suggest that the radio allows individuals to be in control of their imaginations with the freedom to interpret what they hear.

Question 10

Many responses focused mainly on 'culture' with just generalised references to television. Areas covered were fashion, music, dance and how teenagers/children were influenced by how young people were presented on foreign television channels. More successful responses identified specific programmes (from Western television, Korea, America) and addressed 'to what extent' balancing negative influences with positives reaching a reasoned conclusion.

Question 11

There were only a few responses to this question. Many candidates either looked at the decline of newspapers/magazines or the decline of advertising. More successful responses linked the two together. This was often balanced with environmental comment about the use of paper as a resource. Other issues discussed included the popularity of reading news on-line and the loss of employment in the industries. More specific examples tended to be limited in all responses to this question.

Question 12

This was quite a popular choice and often responses were successful with many candidates giving specific examples and similar reasons including the choice of director, story, special effects, actors, budget and marketing. Reasons given for unsuccessful films included restricted advertising, adverse publicity or bad reviews and the use of special effects to cover up poorer qualities of the film, especially the storyline. More successful responses provided a range of examples integrated into a balanced argument which evaluated rather than described the chosen films.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/13
Paper 13

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

This was quite a popular choice and there were a range of responses with reference to how the modern family may be extended or one-parent and the impact of an absent father. The best responses identified qualities and placed these in the context of modern issues thereby broadening the scope. They then proceeded to evaluate how important the role was. Weaker answers listed what a father should do in a modern family as a role model, provider, moral guider, protector and educator with an emphasis on how strong and reliable he should be. There was often reference to sharing responsibility with the mother, the need for face-to-face communication and community in a world of distractions, including social networking.

Question 2

In answering this question candidates recognised that in certain regions, religion/culture and justice were closely linked and that this often dictated whether the justice system respected women or not. The most successful responses placed their answer in their country and provided balanced arguments with a consideration of 'to what extent'. Responses tended to generalise about the safety of women but also considered whether there was fair treatment under the law including discussion of the victims of domestic violence, protection against rape and property rights.

Question 3

This question was selected by a small number of candidates. There needed to be a good understanding of equality of opportunity and link to the idea of civilised society. Responses included gender, jobs, race, politics, as areas which should provide equality in today's society, often interpreting 'civilised' as meaning modern. Stronger responses considered 'civilised' and suggested that there were more important features of a civilised society such as finding solutions to world poverty and world peace and enabling equality of opportunity within more undemocratic regimes. The most successful responses provided balance and argued whether they agreed with the statement or not.

Question 4

Although this was not a popular choice, there were some very successful answers with balanced content. Good answers showed an understanding of the phrase 'inwardly looking'. Some candidates considered the isolationism of certain countries (America/Russia/China) in the context of global influence and power where they could dictate terms to weaker countries. Counter arguments suggested that weaker countries were more inward looking as there was more of a need to provide the basics for survival (food, medicines, infrastructure) often with aid from more powerful countries.

Section B

Question 5

This popular question produced some very considered responses. Most responses discussed social networking as a solitary activity which restricted face-to-face connections, thus inhibiting socialisation in the real world. There was also the argument that modern communications connected distant families/friends via Skype/Facebook whereas this was not possible before such communications existed, arguing that isolation was more of a problem then. The best answers considered both sides of the argument and addressed to what extent they agreed with the statement. In general the conclusion was that most adults need modern communications to connect with a range of modern activities, including work and education.

Question 6

Strong answers provided a balanced view and considered how practical skills were just as important as academic and that training for a specific job could be essential in places of high unemployment. The most successful responses evaluated possible advantages suggesting that decisions could be forced on young people and that apprenticeships could be run parallel to school or college courses as a form of day release. However most responses tended to list the advantages of school over apprenticeships rather than the other way round (including the need to be fully educated, to identify potential before specialising). These were less successful in answering the question set.

Question 7

This question was quite popular. Most responses listed the similarities between sugar and tobacco (addictive qualities, detriments to health, availability, effects on the young). More successful responses considered an alternative view, that sugar can be part of a balanced diet and is not as addictive or as dangerous as tobacco and gave a balanced view with evaluation. Some answers suggested that tobacco is now unfashionable, under strict governmental control whereas sugar is largely unregulated and more easily accessible to children.

Question 8

Responses to this question tended to describe animal research and explain why it is not acceptable. The best responses considered and understood the concept of 'ethical' and considered it in terms of degree of suffering and purpose, arguing that there may be no other way of testing new drugs or conducting medical research.

Section C

Question 9

There were some good responses here which all showed good local knowledge. 'Importance' was seen in terms of ritual, religious significance, as providing community cohesion, as a form of relaxation/escapism. There were references to specific dances and a discussion of the significance of various movements and costumes. The best responses suggested that other art forms (drama, crafts, music) were just as important, concluding that any leisure activity or art is important for bringing a community together and allowing freedom of expression.

Question 10

Although this was not a popular choice there were some strong answers with candidates linking political regimes and degree of religious influence. These candidates gave their opinion on the statement and distinguished between offending the state or public institutions and causing undeserved personal offence where freedom of expression needed to adhere to certain codes of conduct. Such answers were generally well balanced. Weaker responses described examples of giving offence (swearing, criticism, personal humiliation, religious taboos, mockery, and offending gender/race) with the concept of freedom of expression not clearly a focus.

Question 11

There were no responses to this question.

Question 12

This question was quite popular. Most responses described an idealised garden or park with generalised details but did consider such factors as purpose, facilities, escapism and specific landscapes. The strongest responses gave a range of examples with specific details and suggested the psychological need for such places and that they provided a natural environment within the inner city. Some responses considered the private environment of a garden compared with the public domain of a public park and considered the notion of beauty.