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ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/12
Essay

Key messages

- Choose the question you are most engaged with and that you are able to critically explore
- Avoid generalisations on the topic of the chosen question
- Focus on the key words in the question
- Plan answers carefully before beginning the essay
- The introduction should illustrate your point of view in relation to the question being asked
- Essays should include examples which are relevant to the question and support the points being made
- Avoid using examples of fictional/invented surveys, studies or reports that appear to be constructed or fabricated to support exactly the point being made – all such surveys, studies or reports should be authentic
- Where appropriate, always show awareness of the opposite point of view
- Avoid writing over-formulaic answers where paragraphs begin: firstly, secondly, thirdly, conversely, however, finally, in conclusion
- It is good practice to structure an essay with an introduction, followed by the main body and then a conclusion
- Be explicit about the point of view from which you are writing, including, as far as possible, showing an awareness of how this has been shaped by your own cultural and other experiences
- The use of transition phrases/signalling words is to be encouraged – *e.g.* 'moreover', 'furthermore', 'therefore', 'on the other hand' as these signpost the reader's way through an essay. However, they need to be used accurately and appropriately rather than randomly placed in essays
- Do not use or over-use rhetorical questions in essays as this undermines the strength of an argument and can often be too informal for an academic essay
- Avoid contradicting points made in earlier parts of the argument
- Not all questions are looking for a two-sided argument
- Do not list points, but try to develop a considered argument for each area covered
- The ability to weigh and judge arguments, and not merely to state points, is a necessary skill
- Conclusions should not simply repeat what has already been written but should add an overall assessment of the issues discussed
- Adhere to the suggested word limit guidance of 600–700 words.

General comments

Many essays were lucid, informative and well argued. Opinions were expressed, but only a small number of the essays were overly opinionated. Learners were generally well-informed on the topic or question chosen.

There was good evidence of thoughtful planning, although a few candidates were in two minds about which question to attempt. The vast majority of responses were within the suggested 600–700 words limit. However, a number of candidates wrote considerably more than this, which was not always a successful approach as it resulted in more mistakes, a repetition of points which had already been made and irrelevance or weak exemplification.

Many candidates followed the format of a focused introductory paragraph, an exposition and discussion, followed by some concluding remarks. There were also several responses with no evidence of planning, often beginning with an assertion which was contradicted later on, as the candidate changed their mind in the process of writing, or moved from point to point with no sense of direction. Taking a few minutes to think through precisely what the question is asking and organising thoughts accordingly, before beginning writing, is time well spent and usually results in a better essay.

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The better essays had introductions that gave inspiration to the reader and conclusions which either offered a brief recapitulation or, more successfully, offered an awareness that there might be more to be said on the topic. Sometimes introductions were brief and almost entirely unnecessary, as the candidate's second paragraph acted as a far more helpful and precise introduction to the essay. The construction of generalised introductions that contain no reference to the issues raised in the question is unhelpful. Other answers contained a lengthy general preamble, often several paragraphs long, before beginning to comment on the question. Conclusions were less problematic, though sometimes these were very short, possibly due to the candidate running out of time.

A particular concern was use of examples. A number of very good scripts in terms of English and structure of argument were undermined by the lack of supporting examples. Candidates should use appropriate and well-chosen examples to enhance the development of a good argument and they should be confident they have sufficient illustrative material on a particular subject before answering a question. Examples were sometimes general rather than specific, and some essays did not contain any examples at all. Several candidates made a general point without taking time to consider the wider implications. Many argued general conclusions from just single examples or points. There were also occasional factual errors, suggesting that the writer lacked full control of the material being discussed. There were a number of essays that did not show evidence of a range of appropriate knowledge. Several essays were focused on broad issues, relating to the topic of the question, perhaps the question they wish had been asked, without sufficient attention to the precise requirements of the questions as worded. For example, **Question 7** attracted many examples of generalised comments on the environment, writing at length about what humankind ought to be doing, rather than concentrating – as the question demanded – on critical evaluation of the *impacts* of climate change.

Many of the essays were restricted by the views candidates had learned in their classes and revised rather than involving a wider, freer discussion. It became evident that candidates were clearly influenced by their cultural background and the respect and patriotism for their own country. That did not mean that some used their essay as a platform to explain and develop their own views and opinions. When this was combined with the popularly held view of a subject it enabled much more interesting essays to emerge that expressed the limitations of certain ideas and positions before proposing a personal viewpoint. There were occasions when questions were refashioned to suit personal knowledge and experience. Though questions do not ask for examples in their rubric, it is implicit that to make a point more convincingly and robustly, candidates should draw upon their experience and include examples and references providing that they do not become overly anecdotal.

Most candidates matched tone, style and register to purpose. Many learners are clearly aiming for an academic style in their writing and, as a result, there were few informal, colloquial and conversationally written essays. Some answers, however, were inappropriately colloquial and included 'off of', 'bunch of', 'gonna', 'wanna' and 'kids', which are too informal for an academic essay.

Whilst many essays were accurate and clear, there were a good number of essays which contained problems with agreement, especially between subject and pronoun or subject and verb, sequence of tenses, paragraphing, punctuation and sentence construction. Much language used lacked ambition, with repetition of hackneyed phrases ('dawn of time', 'day and age'). Spelling was largely satisfactory or better, though there was sometimes a lack of ambition in the range of words selected. Some candidates attempted sophisticated metaphors and felicitous language, and elaborate metaphors. In some cases there was a sense that these were pre-learned and therefore inappropriate in the context used. Weaknesses in grammar seemed to be largely connected with sentence demarcation, most commonly the use of the full stop. As a result, it was quite common to read a whole paragraph that consisted of one sentence with odd commas inserted to break up the line. Poor handwriting was sometimes an issue, especially for those who used capital letters randomly.

Candidates need to be careful when using prepositions – for example 'rehabilitation in our prisons' not 'ON' our prisons. Candidates should also try to avoid the confusion of one/they in sentences. Candidates need to be direct – avoid phrases such as 'in my opinion I believe' and 'according to me'. Other common errors included confusing the difference between 'people' and person'; 'I believe' and 'I believes'; 'childrens' and 'children'.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The most important role of a parent is to teacher their child moral values. Discuss.

This proved to be a popular question and answers were usually relevant but often provided no more than a checklist of parental duties. There were, however, a significant number of essays that examined what moral values consist of in different contexts and cultures and there were those essays that suggested not only parents had a vital role to play in developing moral awareness but also schools, grandparents, religions and not least the children themselves when interacting with their peers. Other responses, while acknowledging the development of moral values, made it clear that parents have other responsibilities in providing for the child such as nutrition, clothing, and adequate housing. Candidates who took other factors into account often observed that the poor and the marginalised are in a very precarious situation.

Subtle and more sophisticated answers made a distinction between parents teaching their children and children learning from the experience of their upbringing and contact with their extended family. Many were anecdotal, however, speaking largely from personal awareness though usually saying enough to produce a sound argument.

Some candidates explored what they understood 'moral values' to be, but others did not examine this phrase with any conviction. Several answers gave interesting insights into the cultural perspective from which they were writing, including Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, fully 'westernised' and 'traditional'. Some essays tended to repeat 'most important' without actually exploring their ideas in any depth. When discussing moral values a few candidates enhanced their essays by citing examples of lives guided by moral principles, for example, Lincoln, Mandela, and those brave enough to oppose tyranny in a variety of places and historical periods.

Question 2

To what extent has globalisation brought only benefits to your country?

There were many good answers to this question. Usually those who answered it had at least a working knowledge of global economics and many showed an impressive grasp of macroeconomic theory, dissecting the impact of globalisation with arguments that were frequently precise and impressively nuanced.

Many of the respondents attempted to define globalisation before considering its benefits and disadvantages. Several candidates cited the dilution of traditional culture as a disadvantage, but in the next paragraph offered a change of perspective with remarks such as 'these claims are not without merit but there are distinct advantages both economic and cultural'. Many candidates referred to changes in attitude towards minorities within their countries. Economic literacy was very evident. Candidates knew a great deal about exploitation, the dumping of goods, the threats to indigenous businesses, and conversely the opportunities for developing nations to play a significant role on the world stage.

Some candidates outlined and discussed benefits without realising that the question involved considering whether there were drawbacks and negative outcomes of globalisation to give a true view of 'extent'. By including reference to the local economy and traditional industries that are unique to their country, the better candidates were able to provide a wider, fairer, and more revealing picture of the influence of globalisation. Indeed, another restriction was to simply consider the effects from an economic point of view, whereas consideration of political and cultural effects offered a truer picture.

Question 3

Evaluate the view that professional sport has become dangerously obsessed with money.

This question generated some interesting responses, though a number of answers did not cite relevant examples in support of the points made. The best answers maintained a firm focus on the 'dangers' of the obsession, while others produced standard and sometimes arguments that were less well-informed relating to how much money was in sport these days.

There were references to match-fixing, bribery, transfer fees, betting, gambling, ball-tampering, and of course the huge salaries that players can earn. A number of candidates commented that ordinary people on average or low incomes can no longer enjoy the sports they love. A few questioned the premise of the

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question and argued passionately that sportspeople deserve all that they can earn because 'fame and relevance are short-lived'. They referred to the effort put in, the involvement of many in charitable work, the ever-present risk of injury which can end careers. That sport is now a global business generating wealth for all of us prompted a few to applaud the so-called obsession with money.

Better responses explored the fact that 'professional' was an important term and compared professional and amateur sport and sometimes focused on less well-known sports, like chess and e-sports.

Many essays needed to be more evaluative as the idea of exploring the influences – good or bad – of money in sport became, in many cases, very descriptive. What was missed was the good things that money in sport can do for local communities and grass roots participants. Some essays became totally imbalanced, seeing only bad rather than good.

Question 4

It is impossible to maintain privacy in an online environment. Discuss.

A very popular question and one which demonstrated how knowledgeable candidates are. There were references to whistle-blowers, interference in others' elections, recent Facebook controversies, government monitoring, justifiable or not, of individuals and organisations. Candidates were also well versed in the various ways privacy can be tightened in the online environment to reduce vulnerability.

People being 'reduced to commodities' in the online environment was a perceptive point made by a few candidates. Conversely one or two observed that 'we welcome intrusion' as it makes us feel special if we are targeted by companies or organisations.

Some candidates did not consider and respond to the key terms of the question. 'Online environment' includes *for example:* communication by email, messaging apps, social media of often very different types, chat rooms, browsers and search engines, commercial and financial transactions, reverse image search and facial recognition, streaming and torrent sites, uploading and downloading material. Many candidates did not consider many areas, with social media being their main focal point.

There was some good use of subject knowledge and understanding of the dangers and effects on individuals, as well as using examples of celebrities that had been exploited. Good use of personal experience was a welcome addition to many essays though, at times, this became too anecdotal. Less successful essays often adopted an advisory, rather than discursive, approach.

Question 5

Only an increase in food production can ensure enough food is available to meet everyone's needs. To what extent do you agree?

There were some good responses that explored the need for judicious production methods but at the same time considered waste, inefficient methods, and recycling. The most discerning essays considered other approaches such as fairer distribution, self-sufficiency, and the role of the major nations.

Some responses to this question mainly focused on the waste of resources by the meat industry and by ourselves. Many were sceptical of the idea that increased production would actually benefit the poor and argued that the only solution is to support and subsidise local farmers and co-operatives. GM's potential was discussed by many and was not seen as a panacea, particularly in the more arid regions of the world. A few candidates took the simplistic view that if we consumed less and wasted less somehow that would automatically translate to more equitable food distribution.

The more successful candidates saw the significance of, and interrogated, the word 'only', which led them to an often evaluative assessment of the causes of hunger and the comparative importance of increased production and other measures.

Those who maintained a focus on the ability of food production to meet needs often generated some very good answers, including consideration of the viability of types of food and land availability, economic considerations and the methods of productions. Other answers were apt to stray a little into more general considerations of food scarcity and this inevitably led to less successful answers.

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Question 6

The only way to reduce pollution is to regulate and penalise the companies and countries responsible. Discuss.

This question attracted a significant number of excellent answers, and the responses benefitted from a careful reading of the question, particularly of its opening words 'the only way'. Candidates were alert and consequently evaluated the extent to which regulation and penalties might be effective. All questions have challenging aspects and candidates deserve credit for how they approached a question that specifically asks for attention to be given to the conduct of both companies and countries. Consequently, many of the responses were nuanced and assertion-free. For example, the challenges facing developing nations were taken into account in such a way that the finger of blame was rarely in use. The conduct of a few multinationals was criticised but it was often recognised that any penalties imposed would be 'small in comparison to the profits being made'. The danger of driving out wealth creators was also recognised as 'counterproductive'.

The best responses distinguished between regulation and penalty and then took up the invitation in 'only' to explore other ways of reducing pollution. Among the many pertinent examples were references to the Paris Accords, the setting of quotas, Chernobyl, the increasing use of renewables and subsidies in order to promote sustainability.

Several essays strayed from a precise focus on the issue of penalising the guilty and instead wrote about the general dangers of pollution in the world. Many took the approach of asking whether individual responsibility was more important than penalising companies and this sometimes resulted in good answers, though some candidates quickly dismissed the charges against companies, one even arguing very bluntly that an enormous oil slick caused by a well-known company was essentially just one of those things and it was far more important that people looked at their own behaviour.

More subtle responses included the notion of it being impossible to penalise and regulate countries like the US and China as they were too powerful.

Question 7

Evaluate the view that computer technology makes it much easier to learn another language.

Those candidates that grasped the idea of learning a language remotely using technology and how important learning a second (or even third) language is in our globalised world provided a well-balanced, realistic, contemporary response. Others cited the pandemic as a period when online or virtual learning had to be at the forefront of their educational experience. Because of that experience, these candidates were better able to contrast the classroom experience more favourably with the online one. They missed the human face to face interaction which they felt kept them more focused and disciplined.

A number of candidates seemed to misread the question and consequently, these essays missed the main point of acquiring language skills through technology in favour of discussing other benefits of technology.

Some candidates saw the phrase 'computer technology' and wrote in general terms about how marvellous the computer is. However, most of those who chose this question had some experience of trying to learn another language but all too often felt obliged to compare unfavourably their classroom experience with their online experience. A few candidates were aware of interactive sites such as Duolingo and Rosetta Stone and this knowledge along with their familiarity with translation apps enhanced their responses.

There was a lack of consideration of the many other ways languages may be learned using computers: immediate access to newspapers and other media – printed and audio/visual – Youtube, learners' groups, free government and educational institutions' courses.

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Question 8

Music has a significant impact on society and individuals. To what extent do you agree?

This question attracted several well-informed and lively responses. Even weaker responses had plenty to say and crucially most of those who responded had carefully read the question which asked for a consideration of how music impacts society as well as the individual. Consequently, the involvement of music and musicians with societal concerns was demonstrated with illuminating examples; Freddie Mercury, Bob Dylan, The Clash, Guns and Roses to name a few. The fact that music can be shared on various platforms was also highlighted together with the psychological and educational benefits of listening to Mozart. Several candidates were aware of the scientific and educational research in this area. A few candidates alluded to the detrimental effects that listening to some rap lyrics might have, but many of the essays were balanced in this respect. Windows into other cultures also figured with reference being made to K-pop and Country and Western. The individual and societal intersect was evidenced in many essays by references to emotional bonding at live concerts and public or national events. The fact that charities are supported through music and musicians was also mentioned.

Several candidates wrote about 'impact' in an unclear manner saying it 'brings people together', 'makes you feel you are not alone' without any specific supporting examples. Only a small number of essays considered the alternative view that music has no impact. There were a number of essays that included very few examples which are essential if a clear view is to be offered. Some candidates did not engage with 'society and individuals' which led to less evaluative responses.

Question 9

To what extent do you agree that all buildings of historical significance should be preserved in your country?

Many candidates argued that all buildings of historical importance should be preserved from humble dwellings to great palaces and temples. Candidates drew upon their knowledge, quite considerable in most cases, of their own country's historical heritage. The positive and negative effects of tourism featured in many essays and a few considered how expenditure on preservation might have to be limited or prioritised after a natural disaster, for example. Another pleasing feature of these essays was the recognition that what buildings represent is as important as the physical structures themselves, for example, their cultural and religious significance. Several essays, while mainly focused on their own country, referred to iconic structures and buildings from around the world asking rhetorically where would we be if we allowed the Great Wall of China to crumble or the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. References like these were used to develop very powerful arguments.

Better responses questioned to what extent the upkeep of buildings of historical significance could be justified in the face of other, more pressing priorities.

Several candidates partially answered the question by considering the preservation of buildings rather than giving details of their significance in the country for cultural reasons (or possibly economic reasons due to the impact of tourists). Some responses discussed preserving *old* buildings, rather than 'buildings of historical significance'.

Question 10

Evaluate the extent to which works of fiction rely on the personal experiences of the author.

Some candidates explored the issue with reference to a wide and sometimes fascinating range of literary works. Weaker responses had a tendency to ignore the question and write about the candidate's own passions. There was a general consensus that personal experience resides in the imagination as much as it does in actuality. This recognition gave rise to references to dystopian and fantasy literature with J K Rowling and George Orwell being offered as examples.

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ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/22
Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates should be encouraged to read questions fully, to ensure they know what they are required to do before beginning their responses. This includes recognising the number of marks available for each question and therefore having an idea of how much detail to include.

It is also essential to note which of the questions in ***Section B*** require ideas to be rendered in candidates' own words, rather than copying ('lifting') from the material. While it is permissible to reuse, from the material, certain technical terms and other key words for which it may be deemed difficult to find synonyms, few marks will be gained in the questions concerned if too much reliance, for simpler and more everyday language, is made on the terms already given on the question paper. These questions test understanding through the candidates' ability to summarise and to manipulate language to convey an identical, or very similar, meaning to the original.

Where required, word counts should also be observed strictly, to be fair to all candidates. It was sometimes the case that candidates rewrote the question stem or other introduction, thereby 'using up' words from the total permitted. Such an approach risks valid and creditworthy content appearing *after* the word limit, gaining no mark.

General comments

Candidates in this first sitting of 8021/22 in March responded well to the question paper and seemed to engage with the subject matter in both ***Section A*** and ***Section B***. Few candidates left any response areas blank and the vast majority found plenty to say on **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)**, especially.

Quite often, the differentiation within each question resulted from the number of points conveyed accurately and with some degree of nuance, rather than making more assertive or absolute claims, especially in **1(a)** and **1(b)** (see below).

Occasionally, for example in **Question 2(a)**, candidates referred to the 'wrong' part of the material for their answer. Where questions are testing location of relevant information in the material, candidates will need to read the question terms closely to understand how the detail sought is being 'signposted' to them, for example by the reuse of key terms from the material or, as here, the name of the organisation making the recommendations. In ***Section B***, the questions will generally reflect the order and development of ideas within the material.

The level of written English was generally high, with very few instances of responses not communicating a message clearly. There was good use, in many successful responses to **1(a)**, of links between sentences, such as *Nevertheless*, *Furthermore* and similar. Occasionally, however, (full) marks could not be awarded for a question because the expression was too vague to convey a point with the required precision, or because an essential element or detail had been omitted.

Some successful examples of more nuanced and idiomatic phrasing from **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)**:

[Pognia has] many entrants who are 'first-generation' students like Nisha, so she may be able to adjust easily and not feel too socially awkward.

Nisha might well be lured by Kamford's impressive infrastructure... [but] disheartened by its competitive extra-curricular activities… as she is a more casual participant.

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Group practical assessments [at Pognia] might raise a red flag for her.

… which ticks all her boxes … [and] which might be of particular benefit to her, given her interest in pursuing road and bridge construction.

[The tutors at Pognia] could be excellent mentors for her.

… which may deter her from applying here.

She may feel more comfortable around her peers and not too out of place.

…rooms on the campus will have to be shared and she may not be comfortable with this arrangement, as she will be sharing with an unknown person.

Applicants for Kamford should attend an interview but Nisha lacks social confidence. This could cause her to come off as socially awkward, unpleasant and silent and could cause her to stutter during the interview.

Nisha does not come from a wealthy or well reputed background which the university gravitates towards in the selection process.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates engaged really well with the logical reasoning material, based on Nisha deciding which of three universities would suit her abilities, situation and character best, and least. There was a real sense of empathy with her situation and the choices facing her. In ***Section A***, most candidates managed to adhere to the instruction *not* to refer to either of the other two universities in their answers to **1(a)** and **1(b)**, thereby avoiding the potential for reversal or repetition of the same points.

There were some lapses of logic in the points made, depending on which other university had been selected for the comparison across the first two questions. This most commonly occurred when Frostal was one of the two chosen, as it was, in several aspects, the 'middle option' of the three. For example, it was logical to state that a disadvantage of Frostal was its competitive entry requirements, if Pognia was the other university chosen, since Pognia is clearly making least demands on potential entrants. In contrast with Kamford, though, the most competitive of all, this was not a logical point to make *against* Frostal. Similar comments apply to Kamford, located in a small city, being advantageous in terms of assuaging Nisha's parents' concerns about her living in a big city. Kamford is still in a city, if a small one and, while marginally better than Frostal, therefore, it was not a logical advantage when Pognia, a campus university some distance from a town, was the university chosen for comparison.

There were very occasional rubric infringements, where candidates chose the same option in both **1(a)** and **1(b)**, i.e. the same university as Nisha's most likely *and* least likely choice. Both responses were assessed, in such instances, but only the higher of the two marks could be credited.

There were few serious misunderstandings of the material in **Section A** but a common misinterpretation was 'for *all but* final-year students' being taken to mean '*only*/*all* students in their final year'. The point about Kamford being *socially selective* was sometimes understood literally, i.e. as an entry requirement, rather than a comment on the backgrounds of those 'making the grade'. Kamford's links with the aerospace firm were frequently cited as an advantage, despite having no connection to Nisha's career ambitions. Similarly, the highly competitive nature of the sports provision was often missed, when balanced with her abilities. A pleasing number of candidates recognised the term *civil engineers* (among Pognia's tutors) as relating to Nisha's future interest in *road and bridge construction*.

(a) Candidates clearly identified, for the most part, Nisha's dilemma: Kamford, highly competitive but with the most prestigious and academically stimulating environment; Pognia, the 'easy option' but clearly able to help her meet her career goals, and Frostal, the 'middle path', with academic rigour superior to that of Pognia, but without the stress and exclusivity of Kamford.

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Most candidates were able to justify their chosen 'most likely' university with at least two or three apt points and some development or explanation. The best developments made connections between different parts of the material, for instance between information relating to a specific institution and details found in the 'Background' or 'Additional Information'. Less convincing (minimal) developments were sometimes assertive, for example stating that Nisha *would* or *will* benefit from the bursaries offered to five female engineering students at Frostal, when this was not guaranteed. Stronger responses stated, instead, that she *might* benefit from such a financial award, sometimes rightly noting that her high academic achievements made it *likely* for her to be given a bursary.

Responses sometimes appeared to be developed but, in fact, relied upon further detail from the same part of the material. Very occasional answers made no specific reference to Nisha's situation, achievements or character, with observations remaining entirely general, i.e. could apply to *any* student looking at these universities. Such responses are rather self-limiting. Similarly, but also rarely, where successful disadvantages outweighed valid advantages, those answers could not gain high marks, since the question focus was on the *most likely* choice.

Balance was nearly always offered but not always appropriately developed, a requirement for full marks, if all other demands of the question have been fulfilled. For example, instead of saying why Kamford's charging of the highest fees was a particular problem for Nisha, coming, as she does, from a poor area (a valid development), candidates sometimes only offered a positive point or a mitigation in return, along the lines of her being able to work or take out a loan (speculation), high costs being indicative of good quality education, or balancing the expensive fees with the lower living costs with on-site accommodation. While the latter two points could gain some credit as additional advantages, they could not be considered as developments of the disadvantage.

In both **1(a)** and **1(b)**, it was possible to argue some of the details from different perspectives, both of which were acceptable, and sometimes quite original. For example, Nisha's shy personality and dislike of group work were frequently – and accurately – used to develop Pognia's assessed group practicals being a disadvantage to her. It was also possible to argue that being forced to share a room at Pognia might either be stressful for her, or could benefit her weak social skills, by forcing her to talk to someone new and take her out of her comfort zone.

Similarly, the option of *only* online support from tutors at Pognia was sometimes seen as a disadvantage, in not being 'face to face' or, perhaps prompted by recent events, an advantage as being more readily accessible at any time. The large groups for lectures there could be developed negatively, insofar as Nisha may feel less able to ask questions, but also positively, as she could 'hide' and not feel self-conscious. Frostal's lively city atmosphere was viewed both as potentially intimidating for her, coming from a rural area, while other candidates felt it might help her come out of her shell somewhat and offer a new experience, allowing her to thrive.

(b) The general ***Section A*** comments above, relating to logic in the choice of comparison points, and the **1(a)** comments relating to disadvantages, apply equally here. The vast majority of responses were able to find at least two apt disadvantages, and many developed their points well, sometimes even exceeding the amount of development or explanation required for two marks in each of the four points. It was uncommon for candidates to omit specific references to Nisha herself.

Some candidates relied on repetition, using the same information to develop two otherwise separate points. However, if the emphasis and exact terms of development were sufficiently different, these could be credited. For instance, Nisha's moderate performance in singing and basketball could be presented as a disadvantage, when the requirement for excellent extra-curricular achievements for *entry* to Kamford was considered. If sufficiently well explained, this could also be explained as limiting her prospects of being able to *participate* in activities she enjoys, once at Kamford, given the competitive nature and high standards of other students. At the same university, her modest background could be used to explain her potential *financial* difficulties and, with a different emphasis, to elucidate why she might find *social* difficulties fitting in, with so many students from wealthy backgrounds.

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A slight misunderstanding which appeared occasionally in the disadvantages of Kamford (**1(a)** and **1(b)**) was the fact that the fields in which some alumni had achieved most distinction did not include engineering. This was taken by some candidates to imply that Nisha's job prospects would be poor, missing the point that the university's reputation tended to ensure *all* graduates would be well placed for employment but it was an added bonus to see so many distinguished former students, if in other spheres than Nisha's intended career.

(c) Where 'irrelevant' information is sought from the Additional Information, candidates are required to provide the point(s) relating either to none of the options, or to all of them and which would, therefore, play no part in *Nisha's* decision-making process. Most candidates only correctly identified one of the correct answers here, sometimes neither, and with relatively few scoring both marks. It was evident, from some of the points selected, when compared with the universities candidates had chosen to write about in **1(a)** and **1(b)**, that they had subsequently deemed as irrelevant the information which *they* had not used in writing those answers, rather than the information the character in the material would not use. For instance, if they had chosen Kamford and Frostal in **1(a)** and **1(b)**, then it was common to see the two pieces of Additional Information which related specifically to Pognia being chosen in **1(c)**, only one of which was a correct answer. A common distractor was Pognia's swimming pool over other sports facilities, *since Nisha doesn't swim*. As swimming is not named as one of her interests, and there is no mention of basketball provision at Pognia, that makes the swimming pool point relevant to *her*.

A number of candidates could not see why Nisha being nervous about her examination results, or struggling with one of her science subjects, were not irrelevant, perhaps surprisingly, given the number of candidates referring to the competitive nature of Kamford and/or Frostal in **1(a)** and **1(b)**, where both these considerations would therefore clearly be important. Similar comments apply to the fairly common appearance here of Nisha being the first of her family to attend university. Given the information on the backgrounds of her prospective fellow students, also frequently mentioned in **1(a)** and **1(b)** (a potential advantage for Pognia, having many others from similar families, and to a lesser extent Frostal, with its wide range of student backgrounds, but a disadvantage for Kamford, given its more exclusive social make-up).

(d) It was vital, in this question, both to observe the word count (please see general comments above) and to make suggestions which could be specifically tailored to *encourage more young women to apply for science and engineering courses*. A number of candidates made suggestions which were rather too general in scope, i.e. could have applied to courses (for women) in any subject area, for example improving safety on campus and in student accommodation, offering counselling for women's problems, free feminine hygiene products and similar. Some suggestions, e.g. scholarships or reduced fees, were too close to the idea of *bursaries*, already mentioned in the material and specifically precluded in the question stem. Good ideas included targeted talks in high schools by prominent female staff members, celebration of female alumni and/or scientists' achievements, reserved places ('seats') and quotas, all-female classes, easier entry requirements, work placements/internships, and targeted advertising or social media campaigns. Some responses offered creditworthy explanation of points, along the lines of breaking down the stereotype that science is 'only for men' and/or showing what women can achieve in this field.

(e) As with **1(d)**, precision relating to the *arts, humanities and social studies* was necessary here. Many candidates' perception was that arts courses are easier both to enter and study, perhaps also a cheaper and shorter route to completing a degree. There was more thoughtful reference to student interest and passions, there being no 'right and wrong', and the wide range of potential careers arising from acquiring such a skillset, sometimes with useful examples, although there was occasional confusion of 'humanities' with 'humanitarian work'. Other perceptive responses referred to gaining useful understanding of aspects of humanity, history, society and culture, and of people more generally. A few answers mentioned creativity and expression, or needing to follow a particular course to take up the reins of a family business.

Section B

Question 2

Despite the subject matter of the material for ***Section B*** (the internet and social media), an accessible topic area, most candidates found it more difficult to score highly here than in ***Section A***. Questions requiring use of 'own words' (**2(b)**, **2(c)** and **2(f)**) seemed to challenge even a number of those candidates who had otherwise done well on the paper. The thrust and focus of **2(c)** and **2(e)** seemed also not to have been

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universally understood. The language-based questions at the end of the paper (**2(g)(i)–(iv)** and **2(h)(i)–(iv)**) proved quite challenging for most candidates.

(a) As mentioned previously, the necessary information was not always correctly located. The terms used in the question signalled to most candidates that the relevant details were to be found at the end of the opening paragraph of the material. However, some candidates referred to later sections, for example the NSPCC advice, the effects on sleep or the mental health associations. Other candidates gave a response from their own knowledge, making comparisons between television viewing and social media use not found in the material, despite the question stem beginning *According to the material….* Of the possible answers required for three marks, differentiation related to the precision conveyed, for example *a study* was too vague and needed the time reference (*last year*, *recent*, *in 2017* or similar), *more than* three hours of television *per day*, *poor(er)* language skills and *11-year-old* children. Some candidates identified all four correct points, exceeding the requirements for this three-mark question.

(b) Here, the question's reference to the UK Safer Internet Centre tended to refer candidates to the correct section of the material for their answers. However, use of own words proved challenging, even though terms such as *post*, *(the) internet* and *online* were permitted, since ready synonyms would be too difficult to provide. Nevertheless, there were many responses which almost copied out the relevant section, or only made minor changes in linking the ideas, which could not gain credit. Most responses seemed to understand the information but still struggled to change structures and find synonyms, especially for verbs, to express ideas precisely in their own words. A number of candidates were successfully able to render two or more of the points relating to *material posted being permanent*, *being distributed widely*, *disturbing material*, *informing an adult about this*, and *posts not being reversible/difficult to delete/expunge*. Most other points remained elusive to all but a few very good answers. There were some excellent responses offering more than the five required points, all in sufficient own words and demonstrating good understanding.

(c) Not all candidates grasped the idea behind this question, which was to summarise the *two key behaviours* which the five questions suggested as being common to excessive social media users. Those who were successful in answering the question as set were often able to identify *loss of control/obsessive attention to social media* and *loss of focus on more important activities* quite easily. Those who attempted simply to reword two of the five questions gave themselves a far more difficult task, given the 'own words' requirement.

(d) (i) The vast majority of candidates gained the single available mark here, being able to state with some confidence that the key point was to *reduce* time spent on/reliance on/addiction to social media. A few simply described the strategies outlined in the material, rather than stating their purpose.

(ii) Where candidates observed the question instruction, to avoid the strategies already referred to in the material – *self-imposed non-screen time* and *turning off notifications* were the most frequently repeated – they were successful in offering a new strategy. Popular responses included alternative, usually physical, activities out of doors and away from phones and social media, giving the phone to a parent or using active controls such as deleting apps, deactivating or locking social media platforms, and setting timers and limits within the phone's controls. Given the references to addiction, it was not sensible to suggest a reward consisting of *more* phone or social media time, but other forms of reward gained credit.

(e) The word limit on this question caused issues for some candidates but, more often, full marks were not gained because the question had been misinterpreted. It asked for reasons why *the effectiveness of 'cognitive behavioural therapy' in treating internet addictions* might be *difficult to establish*, rather than why the therapy itself might be unsuccessful, which was how many candidates read it. A maximum of one of the two available marks could be gained in this way, with the second mark reserved for those offering a response to the question as set.

Lack of engagement with the therapy and the possibility of lying were most often cited as the problems with CBT itself. More perceptive responses offered that, internet addiction being quite new, there are few published studies and more are needed, and that it may be difficult to measure changed behaviours/success objectively, especially in the longer term, thus making people sceptical. Sample size was sometimes given as a potential issue, with many people not realising or admitting they have an addiction. It was also not infrequently observed that, with the prevalence of

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the internet in daily life, complete abstention, as a genuine 'addict' would require, is increasingly impossible to envisage.

(f) A number of responses here repeated terms from the question stem, which could not gain credit, although these did seem to facilitate the location of the right section of the material to summarise (the penultimate paragraph). While technical terms (*LED lights*, *brain*, *hormone*, *melatonin*) and those with few synonyms (*night*, *sleep*) could be taken from the material, the main difficulty candidates faced was rendering the ideas in their own words. Good examples included *confuse the hormonal system* and *diminish the brain function of producing…*There was also some misunderstanding as to which substance was being secreted and its role in sleep. Some candidates attempted to express the final point in that paragraph but lacked the precision of the original, specifically the *one in five young people*, which could have been expressed quite simply, as *20 per cent of youths/teenagers/young adults.*

(g) Some general principles apply to questions such as **2(g)**. Where synonyms are sought, these should be in the same grammatical form as the original, for example an adjective, infinitive or past participle. In this instance, the use of the term *Explain…* meant that a short phrase could be used to express the meaning. Candidates should not offer more than one response, as only the first one can be considered. In the interest of fairness and, depending on how they are presented, later incorrect responses may negate the initial (correct) one, so this approach can become self-penalising.

(i) Of the four questions of this type, this was most commonly correct. Popular answers included *harmful*, *negative*, *dangerous* and *adverse*. Some inaccurate attempts did not suggest an absolute state but a gradual process, for example *growing negative impact* or *deteriorating*.

(ii) This was often incorrect. Even with the context of the material as a clue, the term seemed to become confused with warranties on purchased items or, less frequently, with police search or arrest warrants. (This comment also applies to the related sentence in **2(h)(ii)**). Common correct answers were *required*, *needed*, *necessary* and *called for*. Some attempts did not fully express the strength of the original, such as *advised* and *recommended* alone, and needed a modifier, e.g. *strongly*.

(iii) Common correct responses included *dull*, *boring*, *monotonous*, *repetitive* and *uninteresting*. Less convincing answers were *normal*, *simple*, *regular* and *ordinary*, lacking the strength of the negative, repetitive implications of *mundane*. It was not uncommon to see *real* or *realistic* offered as an incorrect synonym here.

(iv) Good answers included *late*, *delayed* and *pending*, or short phrases, such as *past the deadline* or *should have come/been done before*. Those responses reusing *due* were not accepted, and neither were those with the sense that something had been completed, rather than still being awaited.

(h) Similarly to **2(g)**, the use of terms in new sentences also involves some key principles. Specifically, answers should use the original term but not rely on the same context as in the material, e.g. *detrimental* should not also use *effects* or *health* in the sentence, while *mundane* needed to refer to something other than *lives*. Only a single sentence will be credited, i.e. no comma splicing. The sentence also needs to express the exact meaning very clearly. If the opposite term could be substituted but the sentence still make sense, that is an unsuccessful attempt.

(i) Too many candidates reused *effects*, *health* or both here, but there were good attempts relating to the environment and the economy, e.g. *Deforestation has a detrimental impact on the ecosystem, leading to habitat loss and extinction.*

(ii) As noted in **2(g)(ii)** above, the term was not widely understood in context, which made it difficult to form a convincing sentence. Others remained connected to *treatment*, so were unsuccessful. Some good responses referred to punishments, either in school or of criminals, referring to specific misdemeanours or crimes to make the point clearly, e.g. *The multiple accusations of corruption against the officer meant that an enquiry from the department was warranted.*

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(iii) Candidates found it difficult to move beyond *lives* but there was some success with sentences relating to routine and lessons, with sufficient detail to give some precision around the term. Successful examples: *Lessons were very mundane once the class clown had left the school* and *I was worrying about mundane issues when there were more important problems at hand.*

(iv) Allowing *long overdue* from the material, given that it is a known phrase, this proved easiest of the four sentences to formulate. Contexts included library books, school assignments and action on climate change, pollution and human/women's rights. A solid example was: *Seema had been working so hard for the company that her promotion was long overdue.*

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