

Level 2 Award

Thinking and Reasoning Skills

OCR Level 2 Award in Thinking and Reasoning Skills J930

Examiners' Reports

January 2011

B902/R/11J

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

© OCR 2011

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Level 2 Award

OCR Level 2 Award in Thinking and Reasoning Skills J930

EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Content	Page
Chief Examiner's Report	1
B901	2
B902	5

Chief Examiner's Report

General Comments

It is very gratifying to report that the January sitting of the Award in Thinking and Reasoning Skills was an extremely successful session.

The quality of performance across both units was generally encouraging, with the majority of candidates using specialist terminology correctly, even those who went on to give answers that attracted partial performance marks. Nevertheless there was some evidence that not all candidates were familiar with credibility criteria and a significant number of candidates struggled to identify and evaluate analogies.

Once again the vast majority of candidates engaged with the stimulus material and questions with intelligence and evident enthusiasm. There was a variety of creative and thoughtful responses to the more open questions on both units which were a pleasure to mark. The vast majority of candidates attempted all questions and tackled the questions with a focus that brought about very pleasing performance. In both units where candidates were given greater freedom to evidence a range of skills with a larger mark tariff, differentiation was clearly achieved. The strongest responses provided engaged, focused and clearly structured answers which demonstrated a higher level of skills, whilst weaker responses did enough to attract partial performance marks.

Neither the question rubric nor timing appeared to be an issue. However a significant number of candidates failed to attempt the final question on the second unit, possibly as a result of ignoring the clear instruction to turn over to the final page. Otherwise there were few instances of candidates attempting the wrong task or of leaving questions blank or incomplete

The examination appears to have been set at an appropriate level. Overall candidates were able to score marks appropriate to their ability and at the same time more able candidates were stretched.

It is pleasing to note that in this session all candidates showed that they were familiar with the pre-release material. This is clearly essential as candidates will not have time in the examination to search through these documents for the necessary material to support their answers. Candidates who were very familiar with the pre-release material were able to produce detailed, developed responses to a very high level indeed.

B901

General comments

The paper seems to have been accessible, with candidates accessing marks ranging from 12 to 58 out of 60. Candidates appeared to have engaged enthusiastically with the topics raised in the paper, especially the proposal to install CCTV in school toilets to reduce vandalism. There was evidence that many candidates have been taught some appropriate technical terminology and, in many cases, the full range of skills. The level of challenge seems to have been appropriate, however, with most candidates completing the paper in the allocated time and attempting the majority of questions.

In Section A candidates generally performed well, particularly in questions assessing their understanding of the components and structure of arguments. Strong problem solving and analytical skills were apparent, especially in questions 5 and 6, which required short answers based upon an analysis of the information given.

Section B saw a wider spread of marks. Certain questions required longer answers and the need for more creative thinking, meaning that candidates were able to answer at a level suited to their ability. Candidates generally did better when presenting their own arguments than when developing counter-arguments. Marks were lost in the questions requiring shorter answers where candidates had not learned appropriate terminology, for example, credibility criteria and analogy.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1 (a):

Most candidates were able to successfully identify the main conclusion and indicator word. Occasionally, marks were lost due to underlining two separate parts of the argument.

Question 1 (b):

The majority of candidates correctly identified the argument map, showing an understanding in their explanations that the reasons were independent rather than joined. Whilst in a minority, there were answers suggesting that some candidates do not recognise when reasoning is joint or independent or are unfamiliar with simple argument maps.

Question 2:

Most candidates were able to recognise this as a slippery slope flaw, though significantly less were able to explain this clearly in the second part of their answer. Candidates need to be able to articulate that the flaw is not simply that one thing is said to lead to another but rather that the jumps are too big or unjustified.

Question 3:

This question was generally very well done, with many candidates accessing full marks.

Question 4 (a) and Question 4 (b):

Generally very well done, though a small minority lost marks by not answering both the 'where and when' parts of the question. Candidates should be aware that language needs to be precise enough to avoid significant ambiguity. In this case, for example, 'in the Daily Bugle' could refer to more than one source.

Question 4 (c):

This was well answered by the majority of candidates, who were able to think of plausible explanations. Some candidates lost marks by giving answers that were not clear enough to be considered an explanation eg this is when people go on holiday.

Question 5:

Again, this was generally well done, with only a small number of candidates incorrectly reading the data across the table and the graphs. Where candidates lost marks, it was more likely to be due to a lack of clarity (leading to significant ambiguity) in their answer.

Question 6:

This question was generally very well done, with most candidates accessing full marks.

Question 7:

The majority of candidates were able to make the appropriate inferences from the information given. Where marks were lost, it was because the answer contradicted some of the facts given in the stem of the question (for example, 'Joseph has changed') or because the answer given was too specific to be reasonably inferred from the facts.

Question 8:

Whilst many candidates accessed full marks in this question, less were able to access the marks in c and d than in a and b. It was clear that candidates who had taken the time to carefully work through the scenario presented in the question, were able to engage with the questions more clearly and accurately.

Section B

Question 9:

A significant number of candidates were unable to name any of the credibility criteria named in the specification. Some of these candidates correctly identified the issue but did not know the appropriate terminology and, whilst it was possible to access the explanation marks in the absence of the criterion, this meant that full marks could not be accessed. There was an occasional misreading of the sources/question, leading to answers that referred to the Judge in document D and not to the Ofsted report.

Question 10:

Answers followed much the same pattern as with question 9, though more candidates could see the issue arising from the parent not having seen the vandalism herself even if they could not name this as ability to see.

Question 11:

Most candidates answered this correctly.

Question 12:

Most candidates were able to access at least one mark by attempting to give an example of a situation in which it is fair to treat people differently. Many were able to go beyond a vague context (eg prison/punishment) and clarify who would be treated differently from who and why, thus accessing the full 2 marks. Some candidates failed to give an example, but instead offered a development of the reasoning in the stimulus material, which gained no marks.

Question 13 (a):

Very often candidates offered general reasons why CCTV is undesirable, instead of countering any aspect of the specific claim stated in the question. Candidates would be well advised to ensure that such arguments are carefully structured and developed, with a clear conclusion (that targets some aspect of the claim being countered) and use of indicator words. Few candidates accessed full marks in this question.

Question 13 (b):

Answers followed much the same pattern as with 13 (a), though general points against the installation of CCTV were more likely to attract marks here than in 13 (a) as this happened to be an element of the target claim in 13 (b). Many answers focused on the issue of whether the behaviour is likely to spread, which was an acceptable line of reasoning.

Question 14:

Only a minority of candidates successfully identified the claim as an analogy, instead offering no response or naming common flaws. Some candidates demonstrated a grasp of the weakness of the comparison and were able to gain some credit in their explanation even though they couldn't name it, but few had knowledge of analogies and so were unable to engage with this question sufficiently.

Question 15:

Answers ranged across the three levels here, as candidates were all able to answer at a level suited to the ability. Answers in the lower level were in a minority, showing that candidates were generally prepared well for writing their own arguments. Some marks were lost through imprecise or unclear conclusions; candidates would be well advised to build their arguments to suit the specific task instructions ie 'it would be more sensible to use student monitors than to introduce CCTV', rather than arguing more generally eg CCTV should not be introduced. Whilst the majority of answers engaged enthusiastically with the subject, offering imaginative and relevant reasons why student monitors would be better than CCTV, only those who developed those reasons rather than listing them accessed the top level.

B902

The first January sitting of Unit 2 attracted a very small entry with fewer than 80 candidates taking the paper. There was, however, a range of centres entering candidates and the overall quality of the entry was good. The paper was set at an appropriate level and was successful in differentiating between candidates of different abilities. There were no really outstanding scripts seen, but more able candidates were stretched and the best were able to gain marks in the high 40s. There were very few really weak papers and those that were seen were notable for the number of questions which were not attempted at all.

Comment was made in the June 2010 examiner's report on the importance of centres setting aside time to study the pre-release material in advance of the examination and this has been stressed in INSET meetings as well. Within the small entry there was evidence of centres having done this.

The topic area for this paper presented opportunities for discussion and role play which would help candidates to develop their thinking and reasoning on both sides of the debate around healthy eating programmes in schools. There was still a significant proportion of candidates however, whose answers to higher mark questions such as 12 and 15 demonstrated a lesser familiarity with the documents in the resource booklet than should have been the case.

In this qualification, Assessment Objective 3 requires candidates to '*synthesise, construct and develop arguments and solutions to problems employing thinking skills holistically*'. In Unit 2, up to 40% of the marks are awarded for A03 and these are particularly important in Section B. It is, therefore, always likely that there will be a question in section B which is worth a significant proportion of the marks and requires candidates to present and develop their own argument. In this paper question 15 was this sort of question.

Given the importance of the question, it is advisable for centres to practise this skill. This can be done using specimen materials and past papers, but would also be advisable using the pre-release material in advance of the examination, especially in centres where there is limited time, in which case skill 3 can be developed in parallel with studying the pre-release documents. In particular, candidates should be encouraged to practise producing developed reasons and backing these up with relevant evidence and examples which can be drawn from the documents. Candidates who are able to do this successfully in the examination are likely to gain level 3 marks for these questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1:

All parts of this question were answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates.

Question 2:

A surprisingly high number of candidates failed to identify the intermediate conclusion here.

Question 3:

This question was not answered well. Large numbers of candidates thought this was an example of a 'slippery slope' flaw, but significant numbers also ticked one of the other two wrong answers. Given that there are only five named flaws in the specification, it was disappointing that so few candidates were able to identify a 'straw man' flaw here.

Question 4:

The four parts of this question were generally successfully answered. Part (b) proved to be the most difficult question here and it is important for candidates to understand the difference between vested interest and bias.

Question 5:

This proved to be a difficult question with many candidates incorrectly identifying 'repressive regime' as the example of loaded language. There were also significant numbers ticking the other two incorrect answers though.

Question 6:

Most candidates scored well on this question, although a significant minority got one part correct and not the other.

Question 7:

Very few candidates correctly identified the comparison as an analogy in part (a), but most made up for this with successful answers to parts (b) and (c). The difficulty candidates have with recognising analogies was also remarked upon in the summer 2010 report, despite the fact that this is clearly specified in skill 8 on the specification.

Question 8:

This question proved to be a good discriminator at the higher end of the ability range. Weaker candidates tend to find assumptions questions difficult and this proved to be the case here.

Question 9:

Very few candidates gained marks for both parts of this question.

Question 10:

Most candidates scored well on this question, particularly part (a).

Question 11:

This question was generally well answered and proved to be a good discriminator. Nearly all candidates successfully answered part (a) and the majority were also able to identify an alternative option in part (b). Although there were few answers which attracted full marks for part (c), the vast majority of candidates gained at least 3 marks, demonstrating the ability to provide reasons to support their conclusions. To develop their reasons successfully and gain full marks, candidates needed to provide evidence or an example. An alternative approach which worked well here for some able candidates was to clarify how a reason was relevant to the specific case which applied here.

Question 12:

This question was worth 8 marks and it again discriminated well. It was notable that the marks awarded across all the scripts received produced an almost perfect normal distribution. Only one candidate gained full marks. There was a lot of reading to do here, but the high number of marks available should have led candidates to spend the time necessary for correct answers to be given. This is a good example of a question where a comfortable familiarity with the pre-release material would have been of great benefit to the candidates.

Question 13:

This question was generally well answered. Only a small minority of candidates gained fewer than 2 marks and a majority scored full marks. The most successful answers made use of indicator words such as 'because' to produce a developed explanation. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to adopt this approach in questions where explanations are asked for.

Section B

Question 14:

Although candidates found part (a) (ii) very difficult, this question was generally answered well and was again a good discriminator. Answers to part (c) were particularly successful, with a majority of candidates gaining 4 or more marks. As in question 11 (c), it was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to develop their reasons with well chosen evidence.

Question 15:

Whilst the five mark questions were generally well answered, this 10 mark question was less confidently handled at the upper ability levels. The majority of answers reached level 2, but very few were of sufficient quality to gain level 3 marks of 7 or more. As mentioned in the general remarks earlier, it is important that candidates use evidence and examples to support their reasoning and this was rarely done very effectively. Better use could have been made of evidence from Jamie Oliver, the Headteacher and document 9a in this respect. There were, however, relatively few answers marked at level 1 and most candidates were able to identify reasons in support of schools serving only healthy school meals.

Question 16:

The final question was handled fairly successfully by those who answered it. However, a third of all candidates failed to attempt this question. It was unclear whether this was due to difficulty or time, or candidates ignoring the instruction to turn over.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2011

