

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/11
Paper 11

Key messages

- Answer two questions from separate sections of the paper.
- Focus on the key words of the question in your essay.
- Keep your introduction brief.
- Make sure that you cover all aspects of the question.
- Put the main point at the start of each paragraph and then develop that point.
- Give meaningful examples and illustrations, and keep anecdotal examples to a minimum.
- Argument and debate should always feature more than description.
- Your conclusions should evaluate points made in your argument.
- Make sure that you manage your time carefully.

Use of English

- Leave time to check your English thoroughly to avoid basic errors.
- Use appropriate vocabulary so your expression is fluent and precise.
- Use accurate sentence structure and grammar for clear communication of your content.
- Vary your sentence structures (simple and complex) and keep them an appropriate length.
- Give clear links between your sentences for logical progression through your paragraphs.

General comments

Candidates showed good examination technique. Several candidates read the questions carefully, made thoughtful choices, and produced relevant answers. A few chose, usually for their second response, questions that might have appeared to offer opportunities for generalisation and descriptiveness. This is always a mistake; a question on poetry, for example, requires knowledge of a few poems and a few poets.

The vast majority used paragraphs with introductions and conclusions, though the latter were often brief and repetitive. The first and last paragraphs should be as analytical as the others.

Some candidates wrote very short answers and in many cases this made it difficult for candidates to demonstrate skills towards the top of the mark band. There were also a few instances where candidates chose two questions from the same section or answered too many questions. However, there were many extensive and articulate essays. Many essays showed sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of the marginalised or excluded, and awareness of global issues.

Candidates offered meaningful examples though, on occasion, the significance and implication of their example was not always drawn out. Lengthy autobiographical or anecdotal examples, which replace objective analysis, are of minimal relevance and appropriateness. There were also a few essays that contained some significant factual errors.

The best responses attempted an evaluation of the content of their arguments or points made. Argument is always recognised and awarded, but what distinguishes a good answer from an average one is the ability to weigh up contrasting or conflicting arguments and come to a conclusion.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

To what extent does migration from other countries benefit your country's economy?

This was a popular question and the majority of the answers were reasonable and balanced.

Although many failed to limit themselves to the key word of the question, 'economy', they demonstrated how social and political aspects of migration have economic effects. A few answers explained the virtues of migration and then gave examples where disadvantages clearly outweighed advantages. A simple statement of 'however migration is not always a good thing' can then proceed to make the negative points but conclude 'on balance the positives are more significant' or 'given all that is positive we suffer more from migration than we benefit from it'. Elementary tricks of rhetoric and debate can help those candidates who find it difficult to move convincingly from one point of view to another.

A few responses misconstrued tourism as 'migration', and a few candidates forgot about the 'your' and wrote about other countries' and regions' experience. Where candidates associated these other experiences with their own country's experience, this enhanced the essay. In general, any digression from the focus of the question should be clearly signposted as relating to the actual question.

Few answers discriminated between offering asylum and accommodating economic migrants which would have led to more thoughtful responses. Refugees were rarely mentioned in responses.

Question 2

How far is water of more economic and political value than oil?

This was popular question but more attention could have been paid to the key words 'political' and 'economic'. However, the vital status of oil was recognised as opposed to the convenience of oil. Many candidates referred to water problems across the globe, from Flint, Michigan, to Africa and beyond. (Africa was often referred to as a country. It is, of course a continent.) The notion of some countries being able to 'hold others to ransom' in the context of these commodities was a feature of the better responses. A few candidates envisaged what the future might hold. Environmental concerns were often mentioned though this often led to more concentration on water than oil and, consequently, these essays lacked balance. Thoughtful candidates recognised that 'value' is not merely a monetary concept.

Question 3

To what extent can distance learning replace the experience of a traditional classroom?

A few candidates misunderstood the concept of distance learning equating it with home schooling or just going on a field trip. Good answers focused on the benefits for the disabled, those living far from schools, lifelong learners and mature candidates, or part-time candidates and those on professional or vocational development courses. Candidates gained credit for highlighting the benefits of the traditional classroom (e.g. for science practicals, and offering a disciplined and socially interactive environment). Those candidates who had some familiarity with online educational methods used this awareness to generate informed evaluations. The key word in this question was 'experience'. Thus, those who wrote about expense and convenience did not address the focus of the question.

Question 4

'Being a workaholic is always dangerous.' How far is this true?

This was very popular question and it was one of those questions which can tempt candidates to offer a heavily anecdotal response. One or two anecdotal exemplars can enhance an essay, but these must be brief. The stereotype workaholic was often portrayed as someone doomed for disaster. This approach could lead to generalisation and assertion. The better essays gave examples of the achievements of workaholics and the positive roles they have in society. These candidates had taken note of the question and addressed the extent to which being a workaholic 'is always dangerous'. There were some interesting comments on the way women feel the need to be workaholics to succeed and also how professional jobs demand overwork to progress up the career ladder. Perceptive respondents understood the concept of 'workaholism' as an addiction. Good answers distinguished between 'being a workaholic' and working hard. This approach was inherently evaluative.

Question 5

'In developing countries, public health education should have a higher priority than the provision of medicines.' Discuss.

There were several thoughtful answers to this question. Only a few ignored the context of 'developing countries', debating 'public health education' and 'provision of medicine' in general terms only. One misinterpretation, though an infrequent one, construed public health education as the education of health professionals. Better answers were structured essays discussing the provision of health education in different contexts. This mature approach addressed problematic Less Economically Developed Country (LEDC) issues such as epidemics (Ebola, Aids, Zika), natural disasters, the aftermath of war, organisational problems of access to educational and health services and the consequences of corruption. The key word in this question is 'priority', so those who chose to describe both education and medicine, failed to evaluate. Subtle approaches realised that one approach may work for some illnesses but not all, for example cancer and broken bones.

Question 6

'Construction requiring traditional materials is a thing of the past.' How substantial is this claim?

Only a few candidates answered this question. However, their knowledge of modern and traditional materials and how they could be linked together was very impressive. Those who concentrated on technology or tools rather than materials did not do so well. Therefore, a hammer versus power tools debate was insufficient. Some were able to discuss contemporary fashions regarding architecture, using their civil engineering and historical knowledge to enrich their answers. These responses provided an evaluation of aesthetics and durability.

Question 7

Should searching for intelligent extra-terrestrial life be considered important?

This proved to be a very popular question and, although it produced some wild and fanciful responses, several candidates were knowledgeable regarding the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the discovery of water on Mars. Others argued that terrestrial problems should be prioritised. Thoughtful responses remained firmly in the realms of actual science while reflecting on the fact that science fiction and the media representation of aliens have established the question of their existence in the mind of the public. Such responses remained imaginative but were harnessed to logic and the scrutiny of a sceptical eye. A few candidates, however, explained as a fact that all alien life would inevitably be of advanced intelligence and be able to solve many of our problems.

Question 8

How far is it possible for traditional stories of creation to co-exist with science?

A few answers contented themselves with a description of the differing views of creation with little discussion of co-existence. Some had clearly wrestled with this issue themselves and had worked out how they could be religious but also scientific. These candidates often referred to scientists who were also believers, for example Darwin and Polkinghorne. The key word was 'creation' but several answers discussed generic science versus religion, not entirely wrong but not fully focused. Few answers discussed in close detail the many traditional creation narratives which vary from culture to culture encompassing the long religious tradition of metaphorical interpretation. Good answers probed the potential for metaphorical creation stories to be understood in scientific terms.

Question 9

'Poetry makes nothing happen.' (W. H. Auden). How far is this justified?

This is the sort of question often attracts candidates who have nothing specific to say. Those candidates who referred to actual poems and poets accessed average to high marks; those who could only offer general observations on the topic did not do very well. Some answers referred to protest poetry, powerful song lyrics and the idea of civilised thought operating on the human psyche in a different way to action. Other thoughtful answers demonstrated how powerful poetry is when used by political leaders, for example Robert Frost and John F. Kennedy. There were also some challenges, arguing that poetry is not meant to make things happen. However, some candidates offered rap as a type of poetry saying that it does seem to make things happen.

Question 10

'Comic books and graphic novels are aimed at a mature and intelligent readership.' To what extent is this true?

This was a popular question and usually answered well. The candidates were comfortable with the material and clearly had knowledge of it. The deep meanings and references in comic books were analysed well. Frequently mentioned was the excitement engendered by the superhero genre. Examples were plentiful: 'Maus', 'Persepolis', Shaun Tan, Spiderman, several manga storylines and many others. An interesting line of argument discussed how the market has changed because of a mature readership with more spending power leading to an increased level of violent and gory images that are unsuitable for children. On the other hand, many were acquainted with Frank Miller's 'Dark Knight Returns', 'Deadpool', and the Civil War storyline in comics. Such responses showed an appreciation for the sophisticated nature of some contemporary graphic novels and comics and how they approached serious topics in a nuanced manner. There were several excellent responses.

Question 11

With reference to any books, films, TV shows and life in general, examine what you consider to be 'good comedy'.

All the responses were more than adequately exemplified, though this was often accompanied by description and narrative 'word by word' of scenes from TV programmes and films. Candidates who defined the principles and attributes of 'good comedy' were rare, but there were some who did. Nearly all gave prominence to situational humour and made references to satire. This question bore out the recommendation, very simply, that candidates should read the question and do what it says. A few candidates were persuasively scathing about those comedians who choose unacceptable subjects on which to base their comedy.

Question 12

Choose two well-known people and assess their importance in the culture of our times.

This proved to be a very popular question and even those who chose their favourite celebrities were able to demonstrate their importance in modern culture. However, the most popular famous people were Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King President Obama and his wife, Rosa Parks, Michael Jackson, Beyoncé Knowles, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Donald Trump. Occasionally, Adolf Hitler was mentioned in negative terms as an example of how a well-known person can have an appalling influence on the culture of the times. The various legacies of deceased people are relevant to 'our times' and this point was well argued. If historical figures were chosen, the majority of candidates showed how their resonance can still be felt in the world today. There were also some polished eulogies that revealed insight into what it means to inform opinion and set trends. The evil of segregation featured in many heartfelt essays and many reflected that although Martin Luther King had changed much about the culture, he had not managed to change it completely. There was not always a balance between biographical detail and an assessment of importance in the culture of our times; sometimes the latter came as an afterthought. The best responses were those in which the influence was central and the background details explained how it had come about.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/12
Paper 12

Key messages

Content

- Answer two questions from separate sections of the paper.
- Choose questions which best suit what you know.
- Make sure that you answer the set question and focus on the key words.
- Keep your introduction brief.
- Structure points in your essay, by making clear how each paragraph relates to the title.
- Give meaningful examples and illustrations and keep anecdotal examples to a minimum.
- Your conclusions should evaluate points made in your argument.

Use of English

- Leave time to check your English thoroughly to avoid basic errors.
- Use appropriate vocabulary so your expression is fluent and precise.
- Use accurate sentence structure and grammar for clear communication of your content.
- Vary your sentence structures (simple and complex) and keep them an appropriate length.

General comments

Most responses were successful, answered the question as set and included a variety of examples to illustrate the main points of the essay. Both essays were often of a good length with detail, but over-long responses could become repetitive.

When the question demanded it, candidates focused comprehensively on aspects of their own country; however, if this was not the prompt then a broader focus was required. More successful responses demonstrated good topic knowledge that included local, regional and global examples which they integrated effectively into their argument to create a developed point. It is important that candidates write on topics with which they are familiar and have sufficient knowledge in order to provide relevant evidence to support their points. Candidates need to spend time studying the chosen question to make sure they understand what is being asked and then re-visit it after every paragraph to check that key words are being addressed. Although topic knowledge was often thorough and detailed, there was a tendency to present it more as a descriptive list than an evaluative discussion, especially if the question required a focus on 'your country'.

Most candidates used the time reasonably efficiently and were able to produce two clearly structured essays, often longer than the recommended length. Introductions were often quite long but most candidates addressed key words and structured their essays more effectively, hence avoiding too much 'off-loading' of material. Many conclusions included a reasoned, personal assessment and avoided just summarising what had already been stated.

There were few rubric infringements and very short essays, though the quality of the Use of English was variable. A substantial number of candidates have a wide-ranging English vocabulary but need to improve using it within appropriate contexts. Grammatical accuracy and correct word order within a sentence are also essential for the clear communication of content. Generally, spelling and punctuation were of a good standard but candidates could improve their English mark by checking for basic grammatical errors, some of which are outlined below. Clumsy or awkward expressions do not obscure meaning as much as grammatical inaccuracies.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

To what extent is a country's government responsible for the living conditions of its people?

This was a popular question and was answered by a wide ability range. Most responses focused on what candidates thought governments did or ought to do and examined their success in doing so with descriptive examples. Less successful candidates saw 'living conditions' in terms of improving a country's infrastructure (especially in the aftermath of a natural disaster) or improving the conditions of the poor. Often, there was too much focus on 'corruption' with little about 'individual responsibility'. More successful responses explored the notion of shared governmental/individual responsibility, often in terms of Rousseau's Social Contract. Candidates also sometimes considered society as a whole from the perspectives of different systems of government (democracy and theocracy) as well as a one party state.

Question 2

How far do you agree that all subjects taught on the school curriculum should be treated equally?

This was a quite popular question. Most responses saw education in largely utilitarian terms, assessing the value of subjects purely in terms of the degree of vocational application determining their place in the curriculum. Mathematics and the sciences were thus heavily supported, whereas English was considered purely as a means of international communication, and the arts seen as of little value. Arguments agreed that education was just a training ground for the future so there tended to be much anecdotal evidence to extend the essay. More successful responses saw education as a matter of personal and social growth and saw the value of various subjects as being a matter of individual choice that deserved to be supported. Some observed that a young person's desire to study music, drama or art was a human right but that this was often in conflict with conventional thinking. The strength of these answers lay in their breadth and addressing of 'How far'. Sometimes, there was an acceptance that the curriculum should be 'treated equally' in primary school but, beyond that, there was a need to specialise.

Question 3

How important is it for individuals and nations to celebrate cultural events?

There was a small number of responses to this question but few were well answered. Most candidates considered identity and tradition, national holidays, community cohesion and spectacular celebrations, often with detailed illustrations. Less successful responses simply described the events with little commentary, but more successful ones addressed 'How important' and questioned the value of spending time, money and effort on an event merely because it happened every year for as long as anyone could remember. 'How important' was analysed in the context of various historical/religious interest groups and those groups which were excluded from such events. Most concluded that such celebrations were essential for sustaining the cultural health of a specific country.

Question 4

'An effective government needs strong opposition.' To what extent is this true?

This was an unpopular question but answered well by politically sophisticated candidates. Most responses acknowledged that a strong opposition should see itself as a 'government-in-waiting' and, therefore, apply its own conduct, standards and expectations to those of the government. Equally, an effective government should have nothing to fear from a strong opposition and never try merely to shout it down but provide balance/accountability. Some considered the consequences of an ineffective opposition (or no opposition as in dictatorships).

Question 5

'A balance between work and leisure is seen as essential for a country's well being.' How far could this be achieved in your country?

This was not a popular question. Most candidates tended to respond anecdotally and were clear about the necessity for work and the benefits of leisure, but argued that leisure was a luxury for those who were poor and needed to work all hours to survive. Sometimes responses just focused on the availability of leisure facilities and described leisure activities with little reference to work. More successful responses discriminated between repetitive labour and creative work such as teaching or social work whereby job satisfaction could be where work and leisure merge, hence negating the need for 'balance', and arguing that leisure breaks were not always essential to maintain 'well-being'.

Question 6

Assess whether it will ever be possible to eliminate traffic congestion in urban areas.

This was a very popular question and produced a wide variety of interesting responses. Well deployed information, about familiar urban traffic conditions, was clearly presented by candidates, and a wide variety of solutions drawn from detailed examples. Most candidates used local knowledge in a partially discursive way, concluding that the fast-paced demands of urban living indicate that it will be impossible to solve traffic congestion in the future. Some responses focused too much on environmental issues and pollution. More successful responses assessed solutions and considered the growing demands on urban congestion, including increasing migration from rural areas and the expansion of cities as hubs for industry and other facilities.

Question 7

'Video calling and social networking have reduced the need to meet friends and relatives in person.' To what extent is this desirable?

This was easily the most popular question. Most candidates described how 'video calling and social networking' worked instead of discussing their effects on social intercourse (and its desirability). This question was attractive to candidates as it was a familiar area, but resulted in too much anecdotal survey. Also, some responses digressed to business and education rather than focused on 'social'. More successful responses addressed 'to what extent' and provided balanced arguments with references to situations where face-to-face contact was more desirable. Reasoned assessment was based on the situational context of socialisation and the degree of emotional contact needed for the interaction to be successful.

Question 8

'Space exploration projects will only survive if commercial businesses are involved.' Discuss.

There were few responses to this question. Most candidates had some specialist knowledge which allowed interesting discussions of NASA and its restrictions through limited government funding. The most successful responses considered the need for commercial ventures to allow space exploration to continue and the growth of so-called space tourism (e.g. Richard Branson). Examples of Mars and Jupiter were given as well as the launch and maintenance of space stations but discussed in the context of whether such exploration actually matters. Mention was made of the dangers of commercial businesses being involved in whole world projects like this and that space exploration could become space exploitation.

Question 9

‘There are many writers in the world but only a few achieve success.’ Explain why this is the case.

This was a quite popular question. Most responses cited favourite novels and generalised about why such writers were successful with references to promotion, ability to relate to their audience, luck (e.g. J.K. Rowling) and capturing the public imagination. Some novels were just described but commented on ‘success’. Some candidates did not use any examples, but focused on the question with generalisations about genre and target audiences. More successful candidates considered a broader interpretation of ‘writers’ to include journalism, screenplays, poetry, blogs and facebook with references to style, language, popular appeal, while balancing non-fiction against fiction and offering media influence as being a major contributory factor to the success of specific writers.

Question 10

Usually a film is reviewed in the media before its release date. To what extent is this useful?

This was a fairly popular question. Most responses focused on the candidates own experiences of film, but ‘media’ was often interpreted as promotion, trailers, television interviews and censorship. Candidates were able to give a range of examples. More successful responses understood the role of professional criticism and its relationship with film consumers. Candidates considered film review websites, apps and magazines, and considered the relationship between these – positive, negative and neutral – in different contexts (artistic, cultural and commercial). This was a question which also evoked wide-ranging answers, in which film censorship in various countries was discussed, emphasis made on how influential a critic could be in determining success. The reasoned assessment was in the context of ensuring that they (as consumers) spent their money wisely.

Question 11

To what extent is your country’s heritage expressed in its buildings?

This was not a popular question. Most candidates showed a thorough knowledge of local heritage, but their presentations were rather like travelogues with series of building descriptions. More successful responses considered the dual nature of heritage as a past to be proud of as well as to live down (empire-multi-occupation). Responses described a building’s architecture in the context of past history/religion and addressed ‘To what extent’ (some buildings were functional-as workplaces). Responses also recognised that some buildings are composites of different styles thereby expressing the complications and variations of a country’s heritage.

Question 12

‘Censorship of foreign influences is the only way to preserve a country’s traditions and culture.’ How far do you agree?

This was a quite popular question. Most responses agreed with the statement and exposed the never ending conflict between tradition and progress through clothes, television, music, religious festivals, cultural customs and behaviour. Often candidates focused on personal experiences with a clear view of their own culture. More successful candidates made observations about the value and effects of tradition and the tension between globalisation and local traditions. The best responses examined the complex idea of whether you can have tradition and progress, and whether this evolves organically or is imposed by governments afraid of the present. It is then that censorship could be imposed, against the will of the people.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/13
Paper 13

Key messages

Content

- Answer two questions from separate sections of the paper.
- Choose questions which best suit what you know.
- Make sure that you answer the set question and focus on the key words.
- Keep your introduction brief.
- Structure points in your essay, by making clear how each paragraph relates to the title.
- Give meaningful examples and illustrations and keep anecdotal examples to a minimum.
- Your conclusions should evaluate points made in your argument.

Use of English

- Leave time to check your English thoroughly to avoid basic errors.
- Use appropriate vocabulary so your expression is fluent and precise.
- Use accurate sentence structure and grammar for clear communication of your content.
- Vary your sentence structures (simple and complex) and keep them an appropriate length.
- Give clear links between your sentences for logical progression through your paragraphs.

General comments

There were many detailed and thorough responses which addressed the question, with some focus on the key words, and supplied a variety of relevant examples to illustrate the main points. However, a considerable number of responses contained few or no examples, resulting in vague and generalised arguments; credible evidence, not just anecdotes, is needed to support points.

Candidates should focus on their own country when prompted to do so in the question; if this is not the case, then a broader focus is required. Many candidates possessed good knowledge of the topics, especially if they concerned 'own country', and were able to provide balanced answers to questions.

Some candidates adapted the tone of their responses to match the requirements of the question and their writing was often accurate with appropriate vocabulary. However, quite a few candidates wrote their answers using informal, colloquial English which was inappropriate and often reduced the impact of important statements.

Most candidates managed their time wisely and completed both essays, but there was evidence that some candidates rushed the second one (or presented two short essays) leaving insufficient time to conduct a thorough and systematic check of their English.

Introductions should focus on the key words of the question to show understanding of it rather than offer a lengthy pre-amble. For this examination series, more conclusions were reasoned assessments rather than just summaries.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

How important is it to respect the borders and territorial rights of countries? Explain your answer.

This question was quite popular. Most responses considered migrants as not respecting borders or cited Mexican wall/Hitler's policy as examples, sometimes with reference to globalisation and a more open border policy in places like Europe; however, often examples were lengthy descriptions. More successful responses considered the consequences of not respecting territorial rights (e.g. Afghanistan/Iraq/Ukraine) in the context of a threat to world peace and there was an understanding of 'the so-called Islamic state'. The best responses addressed 'How important'.

Question 2

'A country's police force is only as effective as its justice system.' Discuss.

There were only a few responses to this question with most suggesting that the police made arrests and the courts sentenced. Specific cases were described in some detail and a judgement made about the final outcome (verdict). Some commented on how the efforts made by the police were not supported by the courts, indicating possible bribery and corruption. More successful responses provided balance with discussions revolving around the need for an impartial justice system, a police force beyond reproach and the extent to which each was either accountable to the state or controlled by it. Conclusions focused on the notion that crime could escalate if either one of these was ineffective and that effectiveness was crucial to the security and well-being of society.

Question 3

'Every human being has the right to a decent place to live.' How far is this true?

This was a quite popular question. Most responses described what constituted 'a decent place to live' suggesting that only people who worked for a living had this right and anyone outside this category forfeited it (e.g. on welfare, in prison) so, although arguments addressed the question, they could be quite narrow. More successful responses considered that everyone was equal and examined the concept of 'right' in more detail. Some responses also investigated the notion of 'decent', highlighting it as a subjective term and relating it to class and wealth.

Question 4

To what extent is education the most reliable way out of poverty?

This was a popular question which produced many competent answers. Many responses detailed the relationship between level of education attained and eventual salary in employment. They also considered the way education enabled other skills (e.g. money management/independent living/socialisation) and empowered people by boosting their self-confidence. The best responses provided balance by considering the expense/on-going debt of higher education in relation to the grants and scholarships available for poorer students. 'most reliable' was examined in the context of accessibility of education for the poor, arguing that some found other alternatives as more reliable (e.g. family need/loyalty, welfare provision). Some cited entrepreneurs whose self-motivation and initiative (not education) was their 'reliable way out of poverty'.

Question 5

'Tourists are rejecting the traditional holiday vacation in favour of experiencing different places and activities.' Why might this be?

There were not many responses to this question. Most responses tended to define 'traditional' as being with family and listed appropriate activities, and then described a holiday destination. More successful responses focused on 'why this might be', often suggesting as ways of achieving independence or satisfying a sense of adventure (e.g. safari, ballooning, long-haul travel, etc.). Some cited the boredom of traditional destinations and commercial pressures to participate in certain activities (e.g. amusement arcades, eating out, night-time). Some responses argued that the 'traditional holiday vacation' was still popular, but there was now greater choice and accessibility to destinations due to improved transport links. A range of activities were often considered.

Question 6

‘There is too much information in the digital age.’ Discuss.

This was not a popular question. Many responses acknowledged that there was too much information, but focused on cybercrime and cyberbullying with some references to national security issues. More successful responses adopted a more balanced approach, by also suggesting that you can never have too much information and applauding the ease of access to information as one of the major benefits of the modern world, giving as an example students who do research.

Question 7

There are still many unexploited fossil fuel resources in the world. How important is it to continue exploiting such resources?

There were not many responses to this question but those offered were reasonably competent. Most considered the environmental damage caused by using fossil fuels and suggested alternative sources of energy as solutions. More successful responses examined cost and the job implications of continuing or ceasing to exploit fossil fuels. There was an emphasis on how essential fossil fuels were to the efficient functioning of the global economy and that alternatives were still in their infancy. There were also suggestions that there were many untapped resources (often in inaccessible places) but that the cost and environmental damage needed to be assessed before such exploitation could begin.

Question 8

‘Medical research should be focused on the needs of poorer nations.’ Discuss.

This was a quite popular question. Many responses focused on ‘poorer nations’ with references to Ebola, the need for vaccination research to concentrate on epidemic focal points and outlined other needs (e.g. employment, cholera prevention and other tropical diseases like Malaria). Responses tended to describe specific diseases. More successful responses provided balance with reference to cost and the immediacy of local research but, in the context of global migrations, diseases can be imported therefore medical research is relevant to everyone.

Question 9

How true is it that modern ‘dance music’ is about repetitive rhythms and nothing else?

There were only a few responses to this question. The responses all showed good knowledge and described examples. Some argued with authority citing the ‘repetitive rhythms’ of all genres of dance music as essential timing for any dance technique. However, the most successful responses investigated specific music and deconstructed it to emphasise such influences as jazz, blues and disco, pointing out their inclusion of melodic sounds as well as lyrics.

Question 10

‘What teenagers read today is of little value.’ Discuss.

This was a popular question which produced some knowledgeable responses. Many candidates adopted a range of valid approaches exploring the notion of ‘value’ from different points of view and including different kinds of reading (e.g. digital texts, teenage fiction, class readers, comics and non-fiction in the form of news and student research). Most candidates showed knowledge of texts and were able to discuss them in some detail. More successful responses considered a wide range of texts, including ones which were considered of little value and concluded that all reading must be of value to the reader, whether it be for relaxation, study, entertainment or communication. The suggestion was that ‘value’ was a subjective term so other people’s opinions were irrelevant.

Question 11

How important is it for television programmes to reflect the diverse cultures within your country?

This was not a popular question. Most responses considered 'diverse cultures' with occasional references to television programmes. There was a tendency to identify specific groups and generalise about the type of television programmes which may be suitable. More successful responses considered a broader spectrum, including disability and gender, as well as citing and analysing actual programmes. A few addressed 'How important' suggesting that it was more important that there be variety and quality in programming rather than specific programmes for minority groups. Some considered television as irrelevant in the world of the internet.

Question 12

**'Reality television shows and video-sharing sites like 'YouTube' have empowered ordinary people.'
To what extent is this true?**

This was a popular question. Most responses showed some specific knowledge but with a tendency to interpret 'empowered' as meaning becoming rich and famous. Examples were mostly from 'You Tube' (e.g. Justin Bieber) but with some references to 'reality television' (e.g. Kardashians), with descriptions of any chosen examples. More successful responses considered other aspects (e.g. access to knowledge, support for others, empowering ordinary people) balanced against the demeaning and humiliating impact of some reality shows. Some concluded that, in most cases, it offers short-lived empowerment (e.g. fifteen minutes of fame) but perhaps encourages others to do the same.