

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/11
Written Examination

Key Messages

Candidates should ensure they read the questions carefully and answer the actual question set. This was particularly relevant in **Question 2** where many candidates evaluated the argument rather than the evidence as required in the question.

The length of the answer should reflect the number of marks available. Many candidates spend too long on **Question 1** and **2** and leave insufficient time for the demands of **Question 3**.

The key skill, particularly in **Question 3**, needed to score high marks is that of comparative evaluation, supported by precise reference to the passage and in relation to the question set.

Question 3 required candidates to consider both documents and go beyond a simple comparison and description of the content in order to evaluate the provenance, perspectives and argument to reach an overall judgment.

Brief and relevant quotations from the documents should be used to support arguments otherwise the answer is generalised or no more than a series of assertions or claims and will not reach the higher levels. This is crucial in **Questions 2** and **3**.

Candidates will not gain credit by bringing in material from their own knowledge from outside the documents.

The strongest responses reached a supported judgment about the issue under consideration.

General Comments

The overall standard of the responses was encouraging. There was no evidence of candidates misunderstanding the passages and most showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions. There were a number who did not pay careful enough attention to either the marks available or the command words in the questions and this limited the level achieved particularly in **Questions 2** and **3**. It is encouraging to see some candidates applying the higher level skill of comparing the argument put forward in the passages in **Question 3**, although several simply compared content or repeated, without evaluation, the argument of the authors. Stronger answers often showed evidence of clear planning for the higher mark questions and this certainly helped candidates structure their answers in a coherent and logical manner.

In **Question 2** many candidates assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument rather than the evidence used. It is important to carefully read, and understand, the question.

There were few candidates who ran out of time, although the allocation of time relative to the number of marks available is an important issue. There were several candidates who wrote extensively on **Question 1a** and **1b** whereas a few lines, or even bullet points would have been sufficient.

As a result, some answers to **Question 3** were not fully developed or supported by precise reference to the documents. Stronger responses selected relevant and appropriate quotes from the documents demonstrating that they had a secure grasp of the arguments being considered and reached a supported judgment about the issue in the question.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Only brief statements were required here having been identified in the text.

For example: "People can control their own weight by moderation and exercising more."

- (b) Only a brief explanation of why these methods would not work was required. The key skill in this question is to explain rather than simply use undeveloped quotes from the document. Those scoring full marks clearly explained the author's reasoning in their own words.

For example: "Moderation is nearly impossible as the foods that are most pleasing to the taste buds are biologically addictive. Everyday industrial food-filled meals contain processed sugar, fats and salt. The amount of exercise required to burn off processed foods is insanely unproportional (sic). It requires walking 4.5 miles to burn off one 20 oz soda or to run for 4 miles a day for an entire week to burn off a large meal."

Question 2

It was important in **Question 2** to read the requirements of the question carefully. It was pleasing that candidates understood that an assessment of strengths and weaknesses was required. However, many candidates did not recognise the need to address the evidence used and instead evaluated the strength and weakness of the argument. Although candidates used some evidence in their answer, frequently the emphasis of the answer was towards argument so, for many, higher level marks were not able to be achieved.

For strengths of the evidence high scoring candidates used examples like: "*The author used an authoritative source from the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition using a 14 year study with a large sample size of 66,118. The length of the study and the number of people used in the research gave credibility to the author's claim that diet drinks lead to weight gain and addiction.*" This clearly and concisely reviewed the evidence used and related it directly to the question posed.

For weaknesses of the evidence high scoring candidates used examples like: "*The research only used women and rats. The evidence based on women does not necessarily relate to males or children. The results on rats might not be the same if the experiment was repeated on people, as they are not humans.*" This showed a good understanding of the limitations of the evidence where there was an attempt to imply the results led to a more universal conclusion than was actually the case.

A number of candidates followed a formulaic approach to this question. There appeared to be an expectation that the question would refer to the strength of the argument and so explanation of such aspects as the credibility of the author, the one-sided argument, the emotive language were frequently, but erroneously used in this context. Many candidates were able, even in the context of evaluating argument, to identify that much of the evidence was not clearly cited.

Question 3

There were two main approaches used to answer this question. The first was to discuss the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempt to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgment. This approach, for many, was only partially successful as the more difficult evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope. This approach also encouraged candidates to give much narrative description, in particular extensively quoting from what the authors stated rather than undertaking evaluation of the convincing nature of the argument. This limited the marks gained.

An example of stating information from the document without development is:

"The author's argument in Document 2 points out that the health of the world is being shaped by unhealthy lifestyles....She points out that chronic non-communicable diseases.....She states that big business is to blame for the wrong lifestyle being adopted."

The second approach was to directly compare the two documents throughout the answer. The best candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each approach. There was no correct answer and candidates could, and did, argue that Document 1 or Document 2 were

more credible. Those scoring lower marks tended to directly compare the content of the passages without evaluating relative strengths. Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence. However, very frequently this was not expanded to evaluate why one author was seen to be more credible nor the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence in Document 2. Answers were frequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text. The better candidates used the second method as they were able to methodically evaluate the relative strengths of the argument before coming to an appropriate judgment at the end.

“Dr Margaret Chan, as Director-General of WHO is a far more reliable source than Hyman, who is a medical practitioner but lacks the resources and experiences with global diseases and background in politics that Chan has.” This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the authors.

“Document 2 has a stronger argument as Document 1 limits its perceptions to the individual and includes a contradictory argument of “we can stop eating” even though Hyman’s emphasis is on addiction. Document 2 reaches a far stronger and final judgment as she looks to the root being political and economic rather than individual.” This is a clear judgment that emphasises contradiction in Document 1 and also the greater use of perspectives in Document 2.

Document 2 contained references to a number of perspectives and global references while Document 1 had a more one-sided approach containing much unsupported assertion. Candidates that recognised and expounded these differences scored well. Other candidates seemed to be looking for a “model” approach to the question by making assumptions based on preconceived ideas rather than reading and evaluating the passages clearly. Several candidates used critical thinking terminology in this context which if applied and explained well enhanced the evaluation. However, many used critical thinking statements that were not related to the documents in this paper. If critical thinking terminology is used candidates should put it in context and explain the meaning so the reader can assess their understanding of the overall argument.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/12
Written Examination

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General Comments

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Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Only **brief** statements were required here having been identified in the text.

For example: *“Loss of coral reefs will affect the people who depend on it for food and will also impact on the tourist industry.”*

- (b) To gain high marks it was necessary to identify and explain two causes for coral reefs dying. Nearly all candidates were able to find the reasons given by the author with many finding at least one piece of explanation. It was possible to successfully achieve this in two or three sentences and extensive writing was not required.

For example: *“One cause of the death of coral reefs is overfishing. Fish are one of the main groups that sustain the reef; without them the reefs will fall apart. The second cause is ocean acidification as oceans absorb larger amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere thus turning them more acidic.”*

Question 2

Document 1 contained a number of accessible lines of reasoning and argument that candidates were able to identify. There were also clear distinctions between the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. Candidates used the provenance of the document well with several expanding the credibility of the author beyond just “Professor”. Candidates were able to analyse the use of emotive language, some giving it as a strength while others recognised it as a weakness with higher scoring candidates linking both perspectives. Candidates appear to be well guided towards recognising the use of sweeping statements as a weakness and the use of examples to illustrate where the author has supported his argument by quoting the evidence used.

Strong candidates kept to the point and looked at the argument rather than the detail of the content of the text. Lower scoring candidates tended to give a narrative description of what the author had said without any specific evaluation of the meaning. For example starting a paragraph with *“The author states....”* and then quoting extensively from the text without further development or explanation.

A good example of recognising weakness was:

“There are certain weaknesses in the Professor’s argument. With the use of emotive language he often states his own opinion and assumptions but does not back it up with factual evidence. An example is when he states in the first paragraph that the ‘scientific evidence for this is compelling’ but does not go on to prove how compelling it is.”

A strength was:

“The emotive language the author uses throughout the source is used to persuade the readers to support his claim for taking action to ensure coral reefs do not die off. ‘They have become zombie ecosystems; neither dead, nor truly alive....’ “

Question 3

There were two main approaches used to answer this question. The first was to discuss the argument of the author of Document 1 separately from that of Document 2 and then attempt to synthesise the arguments to come to an overall judgment. This approach, for many, was only partially successful as the more difficult evaluation came at the end of the answer and was often limited in its scope. This approach also encouraged candidates to give much narrative description, in particular extensively quoting from what the authors stated rather than undertaking evaluation of the convincing nature of the argument. This limited the marks gained.

An example of stating information from the document without development is:

“The author of Document 2 says that NGOs are conducting joint efforts with dive operators....She tells us that at a meeting they discussed the impact of coral bleaching....She has given us the places where coral bleaching of corals has appeared in the past.”

The second approach was to directly compare the two documents throughout the answer. The best candidates achieved this well with analysis and clear evaluation of the relative strengths of each approach. There was no correct answer and candidates could, and did, argue that Document 1 or Document 2 were more credible. Those scoring lower marks tended to directly compare the content of the passages without evaluating relative strengths. Many candidates were able to pick out the aspects that reflect a strong argument e.g. the credibility of the authors and the amount of supporting evidence. However, very frequently this was not expanded to evaluate why one author was seen to be more credible nor the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence in Document 2. Answers were frequently superficial and relied on undeveloped quotes from the text. The better candidates used the second method as they were able to methodically evaluate the relative strengths of the argument before coming to an appropriate judgment at the end.

“A stark difference between the two pieces is that Document 1 merely states that coral damage can affect the thriving tourist industry and “threaten it”. The word “threaten” is highly subjective which makes the claim less credible. In Document 2, however, the author has given “the economic value” and quotes the research done by Queensland University that shows how the tourism industry will be threatened.” This gives a developed evaluation of the relative strengths of the authors’ arguments.

“The absence of emotive language and metaphors in Document 2 such as: ‘on the road to collapse’, ‘like the ecosystems of the Pre-Cambrian era’, ‘enormous’ and ‘unstoppable’ that were used in Document 1 gives it more formality and reduces the risk of subjectivity and misinterpretation making this document more credible.” This is a clear judgment that identifies the candidates view on the relative credibility of the two documents. Others may have come to a different judgement from the same information.



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/02

Essay

Key Messages

- It is vital that candidates understand the assessment objectives.
- Selection and evaluation of sources with contrasting Global Perspectives is an important element in the success of an essay.
- Understanding of and empathy (not of course necessarily agreement) with contrasting Global Perspectives is a key to success.

General Comments

The vast majority of the work seen by examiners was of good quality. The candidates had, in the main, chosen sensible subjects about which they had strong opinions. There were a few short pieces but it was clear that most candidates had worked to the best of their ability.

There were some scripts which showed real ability but which did not score highly on the assessment criteria. This is a difficult paper, and it is new to a large number of Centres. To achieve top marks the candidate has to address successfully the entire range of assessment criteria.

The examiners assess according to seven criteria, which can be seen in the generic mark scheme. Some groups were almost all stronger on the second and third criteria for example. This suggests that the candidates were placing excessive weight on source evaluation as assessed in Paper 1. Having done that, they found it difficult, or did not see the need, to move on to the more important evaluation of the global perspectives themselves. Their conclusions tended to be about the relative merits of the sources, rather than the debate itself. Some even judged the entire perspective on the merits of their chosen sources. These essays were all stronger on the first three criteria. The most successful candidates included clear evaluation of the sources used, which is necessary for a high mark on the third criterion.

The first criterion is communication. Examiners are looking for engaging communication. The best essays are clear, effectively structured with full citations and footnoting in one of the recognised formats, fluent in their use of the language, and engagingly written.

The second criterion is the range of sources. If contrasting sources have been used the candidate will have attained level three, but for the top level, three or four will be needed, and be different not only in viewpoint but in full global contrast. While two or three academic sources discussing the pros and cons of genetically modified food might provide a clear contrast, there are other types of contrast which can make the treatment more fully global: for example consumers in the developed world (perhaps Europeans and Americans with different views) and farmers in LEDCs who may or may not want to use GM seeds. There is bound to be material released by the companies producing the GM seeds. They have a perspective. It goes without saying that these types of source are more difficult to find than summary websites, but they can be hugely enriching.

Thirdly, these sources should not be just cited, but evaluated. Candidates should remember they are not evaluating an unseen source in a timed examination; they have found and chosen these sources. There is not much point choosing a source and then discussing its weaknesses as an argument. If in the end it is an unreliable source, why pick it to exemplify a global perspective at all? One of the commonest limitations in source evaluation is where candidates were still in effect thinking in the same way as Paper 1. Another was to ignore the evaluation completely. Candidates who chose good sources but simply took them at face value scored only level 1 on the third criterion.

The next three criteria concern the evaluation of the contrasting perspectives. This is the debate, the perspectives on which are exemplified by the sources. Weaker candidates who have evaluated their exemplar sources sometimes find it hard to move on: the quality of the global perspective is not dependent on the quality of one or two sources!

The first element of assessment concerns empathy. How fairly has the candidate treated the two perspectives? Those candidates who have written descriptively or who have produced an assessment of an issue without identifying a debate will not score highly on this. So too will those who are so clear on their personal perspective that they cannot do justice to the one with which they disagree. Some candidates find it very hard to do justice to views they consider wrong. Issues which evoke a strong emotional response can be difficult. Candidates might have very strong personal views on such things as whale hunting, animal testing for cosmetics, keeping animals in zoos, for example. This can lead to improved responses, if the treatment is fair and the conclusion is empathetic. However, for some the opposing GP is so wrong that the candidate can only bear to mention the alternative to attack it. 'They say they do x but in effect...' This will not score highly on balance and empathy. This is in no way to discourage candidates from topics they feel passionately about, or have strong religious view on. On the contrary, by exploring the global perspective they do not share, they have an opportunity to reflect on and enrich their own. If they can communicate this to the examiner they will score very highly.

The next criterion is that of analysis and understanding of the issue. Here a good essay summarising a problem may score much higher than it did on the previous criterion. An essay which does not go beyond describing the global perspectives will score modestly.

The sixth criterion is the judgement on how globally the perspectives really differ. So if the death penalty has been discussed the ethical nature and importance of the difference will take the essay to level four quite easily, but for level five there needs to be a truly global understanding. Are the arguments about the death penalty the same in China as they are in Nigeria... as they are in the USA? It is unlikely.

Finally the candidate gets to put a personal view in the conclusion. This may come down firmly on the side of one global perspective, but it need not. What matters is that it is based on and reflects on the argument. It may show an evolution in the candidate's thinking, but most of all it must show why the candidate is prepared to hold a particular perspective, with an acknowledgement of its limitations, and if appropriate ideas about further research and development. Few candidates managed to reach the top mark for this criterion.

Examiners look for all seven of these criteria. It may be understood therefore that however great the merits of an essay, if it does not address one or more of these criteria, the overall mark will go down. Teachers need to be familiar with the demands of the syllabus and to ensure that they and their students know what to do. Once they are writing, the candidates must be on their own of course, but it is entirely appropriate to help them choose their title and to remind them of the importance of identifying and evaluating the global perspectives.

There are some good ways to help the students:

Choosing an essay title

The first task for the candidate is to choose an appropriate essay title. This is vital, as the title, in the form of a question, must address a debate between global perspectives. This means in effect a question about which there are 'good' people in the world who disagree. If the question has two clear sides but is not global the limit is level 3. Take, for example: 'should SATS be discontinued in US schools?' If this is considered uniquely in the US context, it will not fulfil the global criterion. If the student used the examples of education in other countries, - Finland, China, Singapore, France, for example - and used these to support both sides of the debate, it would be considered global. There are clear arguments on both sides, so a debate can be evaluated.

Choosing sources

As part of the evaluation of the perspectives the student needs to identify a minimum of two exemplar sources: sources which exemplify one global perspective on the question. These should be chosen with care. They should be as globally different as possible. Usually they should be of different nationalities, and it helps significantly if they are different types of source. While two academic studies on different sides can produce a clear debate a good 'non-expert' source can increase the global quality considerably. So on the SATs question, why not interview a teacher and a student as well as using the various contrasting academic

studies. Of course a teacher or student with experience of a different system could provide an excellent contrast.

Examples

Examples of good titles from this session:

- Should Prostitution be Decriminalized?
- Are the threats of hydraulic fracturing worth the benefits?
- Is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) an acceptable practice?
- Is it right to keep animals in zoos?

All these set up clear debates and encouraged the candidate to address the assessment criteria.

- Should creationism be taught in public schools?

This is excellent in its focus and clarity as a question. It could be dangerous: if the examples were all from one country it might cease to be global in significance. But the issue does have a global dimension. Should a nation's public, or state, as the British call them, schools base teaching on a specific religious doctrine? In France for example, there are devout Roman Catholic teachers who believe strongly that there is no place for religion on state education.

As a rule of thumb, titles starting with 'How do...' and 'What are...' tend to lead to descriptive approaches, and 'to what extent' to a summary or consensus approach. Many of the best titles start with 'Should....' This leads naturally to a contrast of opinions or perspectives.

Examples of evaluation from this session:

Some source evaluation relies too much on 'stock' ideas, as used to comment on unseen sources, but which are inappropriate in a researched piece.

- 'Satish himself is not a very credible source because he is only introduced as a space expert which does not necessarily give him credibility because there is no substantial information to back up his title.' The candidate would consider this source evaluation, but this is a researched essay, and in effect the candidate has admitted failing to research the source.
- 'The first perspective is that severe sentencing does in fact deter crime. The source used was published by the University of Chicago Press Journals. The University of Chicago is a renowned institution especially within law studies proving its ability to see. Being that it is a private school there is no bias present and any information given would be objective and logical overall.' This is in the context of crime against property – surely the institution is one supporting property owning therefore hardly neutral on crime.
- Source 2 is a strong article overall, but the author uses a personal experience to support his argument and it can't be considered because it could be biased. The word bias is very easy to misuse, and here the candidate conflates personal opinion and bias.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

Paper 9239/03

Team Project

Key Messages

- Success in this component relies on a firm understanding of the process of team work involved and the pieces of work which need to be submitted.
- Presentations must be submitted for *each individual* and not as a collective team.
- The identification of topics and clear differentiation of perspectives in a well-organised argument leading to a supported solution are key to successful presentations.
- The reflective paper rewards the focused evaluation of both the success of team work and the impact of other perspectives on the candidate's own.

General Comments

This session marks the first examination at AS Level of this interesting and engaging new specification, which is a development of the previous 8987 AS Level Global Perspectives syllabus. Of the three components, this one shows the most significant change as it is now a team project, assessed individually through an 8 minute live presentation and 800 word reflective paper produced by each learner. As such, it will be useful in this report to make some general comments about the process learners are expected to go through and the work they have to produce, before moving on to the key questions addressed by the marking criteria.

As described in pages 24–26 of the syllabus, learners should be organised into groups of 2–5 by their teachers, depending on the context and needs of the centre. They then need to be helped to identify a common local problem with global significance. Following this, they work together as a group to research this problem using a range of sources they have found. However, each individual learner must then identify *their own* solution from a specific perspective and prepare an individual presentation arguing for that solution and differentiating it from alternative solutions which might be proposed from other team members. Finally, each individual learner must reflect on the collaborative process and the ways in which their own views have been developed during the team work. This reflection must be presented in a reflective paper of 800 words.

A number of key considerations arise from this. The first is that there must be a very clear topic on which all team members are agreed and a problem (i.e. a particular situation which needs to be resolved) to which it is linked. This must be referenced in each of their presentations and reports. Secondly, each learner needs to be aware that their task is to identify a solution of their own to this problem and to understand that this solution is generated by a specific perspective (or world view) which they have adopted and which differs from other members of their team. Their presentation then becomes an argument for that solution. As such, not only must it be effectively delivered, it needs to propose their solution as a conclusion which is supported by effectively structured reasons and evidence in the main body of the presentation. The presentation should also identify and evaluate alternative perspectives as counter-arguments, showing both how it differs from them and is preferable to them. Finally, the reflective paper needs to be understood as a separate and intellectually challenging piece of work, where learners undertake two distinct tasks. They need to evaluate the effectiveness of the way in which the group worked together in undertaking their research but they also need to consider how their own views were challenged or developed by engaging with the alternative perspectives suggested by other team members (or other perspectives and solutions they located in the research they undertook).

One other general point should be made about the work undertaken by learners. As is the case for 9239/02, the length of each piece of work is prescribed in the syllabus and these lengths are absolute. Therefore, examiners will stop listening to presentations after eight minutes and stop reading reflective papers after 800 words. Material after these points will not be counted as part of the assessment. It was notable that although a small number of learners did exceed these limits, a much more significant problem in this first series was that many presentations were too short, often lasting for five minutes (or even less). Some reflective papers were below 500 words, and a few significantly below this length. In the case of presentations, this meant that learners were struggling to develop the detail of their research, to develop the structure of their argument or to present an effectively supported conclusion. Reflective papers which were under length found it hard to achieve both of the required parts of the task, and usually only focused on one or the other.

A final general point relates to the submission of work. Centres should submit a video file for each individual learner's presentation of a maximum of eight minutes. This should be produced so that it is not of an excessive resolution and size – files of up to 1GB or more for each learner make it very hard for centres to submit this work online, and for Cambridge to access. Centres should also check that the files are actually playable before submitting them. The presentations should be individually given by each learner on their own, presenting their own solution and perspective. If Centres want their learners to deliver a team presentation it is the centre's responsibility to edit the recordings so that each individual submits a presentation for assessment. Learners should also submit a verbatim transcript of their presentation. The purpose of this is to resolve any difficulties with sound quality on presentations and to verify what the learner has said. This means it should be a word-for-word record of what is said in the presentation, although it is not necessary to reproduce pauses and hesitations. For this reason it is more effective to produce the transcript after the presentation has been given. If the transcript is a script produced in advance from which the learner reads without making eye contact with the audience, it is likely that the effectiveness of their presentational effectiveness (and hence part of their mark) will be reduced. Centres should also submit an electronic copy of any slides or other visual aids used during the presentation. Finally, the 800 word reflective paper is a required element and the learner cannot receive the marks allocated for reflection and collaboration without it. It is worth observing here that the presentation and reflective paper are individually and not holistically marked using two separate marking grids. This means that learners must demonstrate in each piece of work individually that they have achieved the required criteria, and not rely in the presentation on something they have indicated in the reflective paper and vice versa. This sometimes became a problem when learners clearly identified their topic and perspective in the reflective paper but did not do so in the presentation itself.

What now follows are some specific examples of good practice and areas which might be improved still further. These are organised under seven key questions which were asked by examiners in assessing the work submitted. These are precisely aligned to the seven bullet points at each level on the two marking grids, five for the presentation (which is marked out of 25) and two for the reflective paper (which is marked out of 10).

The Presentation

1. How precisely has the learner defined the topic using their research?

Nearly all learners were able to go at least some way towards defining a suitable local issue which arose from some research. It was encouraging to note that a number of learners were able to identify global issues that extend beyond a local or national context and would be experienced by people wherever in the world they live or work. Some learners took the opportunity to work on topics which were of genuine personal concern, such as the identification of sexism as an issue from a local example, which was then developed through a number of national and global contexts. Successful presentations were careful to develop and contextualise their topic in order to give it a sharp focus and not to leave it broad or vague. Another feature of successful presentations was the use of a range of carefully selected, relevant and specific sources to support their argument. This constituted detailed research; the use of sources to make contrasts and develop the argument made it varied.

2. How sharply has the learner differentiated their own perspective from alternative team or research perspectives?

Of the requirements of the presentation, learners found this the most challenging to achieve. Learners who did this successfully understood the requirement that they needed to argue for a solution to the team problem from a specific perspective, and to evaluate the ways in which their perspective differed from other perspectives within the team, or identified from their research. The syllabus defines a perspective as 'a viewpoint or standpoint, sometimes embedded in or strongly informed by a world view. Perspectives tend to be coloured by the circumstances in which people live, the language they use and

the ideas that surround them. Different perspectives should be genuinely contrasting (i.e. they should come from a different world view rather than represent subtly different takes on an issue). Successful learners were able to identify and distinguish their perspective from the topic, and were in control of how their perspectives differed from the others in their team. One presentation began, for example, 'I'll be talking to you about providing sustainable food sources for those in need, specifically through the solution of urban agriculture.' Having established food insecurity is such a problem worldwide, it then continues with, 'my group mates are going to discuss the solutions of aquaponics and genetically modified crops, but I will be talking about urban agriculture.' Each of these approaches represents a different perspective on the problem of food insecurity, and this opening is a straightforward way in which the learner can demonstrate this.

3. How well-structured and supported is the learner's argument?

Successful learners for this component are making arguments in their presentation. This means that not only do their presentations conclude with a solution, those conclusions are supported by an organised sequence of reasons. To be well-argued, those reasons should themselves be backed up by evidence that is relevant to the focus of the presentation. This extract from a presentation, arguing for a solution to the integration of immigrants from a health-care perspective, serves as a good example of a well-argued chain of reasoning:

Recently, there has been a tendency among some critics, such as Elizabeth Lee Vliet, to blame all our nation's ills on immigrants. As these facts prove, health care expenditures in the U.S are lower for immigrants than for native-born residents. This means that immigrants use less health care services overall than citizens.

Each sentence in the sequence here is linked argumentatively to the last in a chain of reasoning, which also integrates support from sources and, prior to this, other evidence in a concise but effective argument.

4. How relevant and well-supported is the conclusion in presenting the learner's solution?

The assessment of the conclusion is closely linked to that of the argument: to achieve the higher levels, it should be linked to the reasoning and evidence previously presented and also constitute a solution to the problem addressed by the learner from the perspective they have selected. In this sense, one developed and supported solution is likely to score more highly than two or three briefly summarised alternatives. Describing the limits of the solution proposed and problems with it is also likely to be less effective: it is important instead to provide support for what is being proposed. Given the nature of the task, the solution is a key component of the presentation, and higher-level learners gave it the significant space it deserved.

5. How effectively has the learner used presentational methods?

It is significant that this component is assessed in part on the effectiveness of the learner's communication skills. These include both the visual aids used and the quality of their own delivery in terms of intonation and body language. Higher scoring learners had rehearsed their presentations and engaged with their audience, tending to use notes and maintain eye contact with their audience rather than reading from a script. Visual aids were carefully selected and highlighted meaningfully as part of the presentation, rather than merely being employed as a background. Where PowerPoint slides were used, many were colourful and provided strong visual support for the presentation. Learners understood that their function was to provide a complement to the verbal delivery of the presentation, so overcrowded or text heavy slides were avoided, and successful learners understood that parts of the script should never be copied on to slides for them to read from. Some learners used very appropriate and relevant video clips from external sources, but sometimes did not incorporate these into the presentation. Successfully used clips were relevant and substantively integrated into the argument.

These approaches are sufficient to allow learners to achieve Level 3 work. To access Levels 4 and 5 for presentational methods, at least some degree of creativity must be employed. This might come through creative use of visual aids to enhance the delivery of the argument, or a creative engagement by the learner themselves with their audience using voice or gesture, or a combination of these techniques. It is important to note however that creativity should serve the communication of the argument and cannot be credited as a separate addition to this.

Reflective Paper

The reflective paper gives learners the opportunity to consider the process they have undertaken in researching and producing their individual presentation as part of a team. As such, it is their opportunity to provide evidence for AO2 (reflection) and the collaboration aspect of AO3. This makes it a rewarding but challenging task to accomplish successfully. Stronger learners evaluated and make judgements on their performance and did not just describe what they did. The reflective paper is judged using two questions for assessment, and stronger papers ensured that they addressed both, using discrete sections:

1. How well has the learner evaluated their own practice in working with others to identify a problem and explore possible solutions?

The focus here is on the learner's evaluation of their own practice in working with others. This should go beyond what the group did and focus on areas that worked well and were less successful before making a reasoned judgement on the success of the group work. This might involve making use of some of the theoretical approaches to group work outlined in the guidance in the 9239 online learning platform provided by Cambridge, but this is not necessary. The following is an example of a simple but effective approach to outlining an aspect of team work, then highlighting strengths, weaknesses and the actions taken as a result:

Within our group we partnered into pairs and assigned each pair with two of the four components we wanted to cover. Then the two members within those pairs would assign one of the components to each other. By doing this every group member had one of the aspects that they were responsible for researching and after all the information was gathered we shared that information amongst one another. This was a very effective strategy because everyone in our group executed their assigned job with sufficiency and managed to provide everyone with useful information and resources needed to successfully complete our assignment in a timely manner. However, there was one minor issue that came across our group when using this method. Being able to copy and paste information was simple but being able to paraphrase and combat text chunkiness called for a bit more effort. Several of us struggled trying to avoid gathering twelve pages of information. We came to the conclusion that we needed to do better with only gathering the most important and helpful information.

2. How well has the learner reflected on the extent to which their own standpoint and the scope for future research have been affected by alternative perspectives from within their team and from additional research?

The focus for this second part of the assessment is on the impact of alternative perspectives. Learners need to identify what those alternative perspectives are and make an assessment of the extent to which they have made an impact on their own point of view. This is an example of the clear identification of how other people within the team have impacted upon the learner's position:

My point of view was strengthened because through research I discovered that strict immigration laws would be the most simple and most easy to follow. But, with further analysis into other perspectives such as unilateral immigration, presented by [Learner B], made me realize that the strictness of laws may not be the best way to handle the solution. In that way was how I determined that [Learner C]'s solution would be the most appropriate.

Comments on Specific Questions

Topics and questions are decided upon by learners themselves working as teams and individuals within centres. However, it is important to note that this should be a process actively managed by tutors. As with the previous 8987 specification, the guidance in the syllabus about teacher intervention is very clear. Teachers should not read or correct drafts once the process of producing presentations and reflective papers has begun. However, they should actively teach the skills and processes involved beforehand and also work closely with teams of learners as well as individuals to identify problems of local and global relevance on which they can work, and also to help learners to develop questions which will allow them to contrast perspectives in approaching these problems and work towards solutions which can be supported in presentations and explicitly and evaluatively contrasted against alternative solutions.