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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

THINKING SKILLS

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8436/01
Multiple Choice

<i>Question Number</i>	<i>Key</i>	<i>Question Number</i>	<i>Key</i>
1	B	26	A
2	C	27	D
3	D	28	C
4	C	29	A
5	C	30	E
6	D	31	E
7	D	32	A
8	B	33	D
9	B	34	B
10	C	35	D
11	E	36	C
12	A	37	A
13	B	38	D
14	B	39	B
15	D	40	A
16	E	41	C
17	C	42	B
18	B	43	B
19	C	44	C
20	D	45	D
21	E	46	C
22	B	47	C
23	E	48	C
24	B	49	B
25	C	50	C

General comments

Applied Arithmetic

In this section of the Paper, **Question 7** demonstrated the importance of reading the question carefully. 59% of the candidates gave the correct response, **D**, but 29% gave the answer as **C**. It should be noted that this is the time the last bus to Seddon arrived at Benwick Priory.

Question 9 was answered correctly by the vast majority of the candidates.

Only 28% of candidates chose the correct response to **Question 12**. 47% of candidates chose **B**, omitting to include the engine overhaul in the expenditure.

The correct response to **Question 14** was **B**, but only 29% of the candidates chose this answer. 49% of candidates incorrectly chose **C**.

Communication

In this section of the Paper, more than 80% of candidates correctly answered **Question 23**.

Only 26% of the candidates gave the correct response to **Question 26, A**, while 46% chose **B**. The stimulus states 'Many people might think that the forests' vast size and almost sacred ecological status will buy time for the environmentalists to work miracles.' Answer **A** emphasises this belief.

Assessing Argument

Question 35 was answered correctly by most candidates.

Although 67% of candidates gave the correct response to **Question 37**, 18% chose **D** (which is an intermediate conclusion) and 13% chose **B**. The question stimulus states that a supporting reason is that our nearest animal relatives have a non meat diet.

Question 49 was a difficult item and only 21% of candidates gave the correct response **B**. 43% chose **C**, a statement reinforcing the conclusion, and 29% chose **A**, an intermediate conclusion.

Question 50 was a difficult item, with only 24% of candidates giving the correct response **C** and 47% choosing **A**. This weakens the argument by suggesting that there are other ways to solve the problem.

Both **Questions 37** and **49** show that some candidates only went as far as identifying the intermediate conclusion before answering the question. Candidates should be reminded that in **Assessing Argument** questions they need to identify the main conclusion.

Paper 8436/02

Paper 2

General comments

In general the Paper proved to be discriminating, especially **Questions 2** and **3**. The highest scores were awarded to candidates who consistently demonstrated their ability to understand and reconstruct arguments, recognise implications and assumptions, draw reliable inferences, and respond to the texts by presenting their own relevant and well-reasoned arguments.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question proved as usual to be the easiest of the three. Marks were available for commenting on the reliability of the witnesses; and the plausibility of their respective accounts.

Most candidates rightly concluded that Jed was unlikely to have started the fight, though some failed to provide reasoning that strongly supported this verdict, and was consistent with the inferences they drew from the various items of evidence. It was not enough simply to summarise or paraphrase the text, then answer the question in a line or two. Full credit went only to candidates who: carefully explored what can (and cannot) be reliably inferred from the individual items of evidence; noted the degree of corroboration or conflict between the items of evidence; and 'weighed' or 'balanced' the evidence before drawing a conclusion.

It is very important for candidates to qualify their answers with an appropriate level of probability. The fact that Rico had only his own gang to support his accusation, and the fact that not one person saw Jed at or on his way to the scene, outweigh the circumstantial evidence that he could, conceivably, have got to and from the playground in the time Mr Square was out of the classroom. It therefore lends support to the claim that Jed was not involved, but it does not prove it, as some candidates claimed.

Some candidates set too much store by one factor, and/or inferred too much from it. For instance, the secretary and the teachers were arguably reliable witnesses (in the sense that they were not aligned to either side); but that in itself does not establish that Rico was lying, especially as the evidence these witnesses gave was negative. (The claim that a witness did not see someone at a given place does not mean the person was not there.) Similarly, motives and incentives were insufficient grounds to infer either that Jed would not have risked leaving the classroom; or that Rico set up the fight with the intention to frame Jed.

Many candidates lost potential marks by not thinking around the evidence in a sufficiently critical way. For example, the children in the playground all claimed that they did not remember seeing Jed. Taken at face value this seems like strong, corroborating testimony from many neutral, independent sources; and many, if not most, candidates simply commented to this effect. ('The children would not all lie.' 'The children weren't on either side.' etc.) But there was much more that could have been said, for example that the children may have been afraid to speak out against Jed (who was a known troublemaker); or that it is not uncommon for school children to observe a code of silence when asked to inform on their peers. On the other hand, it could be argued that it would be unusual for not one of the children to speak up, if Jed had in fact been there. It could also be said that the fight would have attracted attention; and/or that Jed's notoriety meant that the children would have been unlikely not to recognise him. These considerations largely cancel each other out, leaving Jed's alibi uncontested (by the children), but by no means incontestable. This level of careful, balanced consideration is needed to secure the top range of marks; and a small number of candidates did achieve this standard.

Understanding the passage was clearly no problem. Almost every script showed that the candidate had grasped the meaning of the narrative and the main issues it addressed. What differentiated between the best, the average and the poorer responses was the depth of discussion and the strength of reasoning.

Question 2

- (a) This question proved relatively straightforward and most candidates had little difficulty recognising the two planks of the argument.
- (b) Again, a straightforward question of locating stated reasons, which caused few problems. Some candidates lost a mark by failing to answer the second part of the question: i.e. how the claim supported the argument. As always candidates need reminding to read and answer the whole of a question.
- (c) Most candidates gave the simplistic answer that the objection weakened the argument, because it meant that the Oscars have not always picked films for wrong reasons. More credit was given to those candidates who noted that what happened in the past was not entirely relevant to the case for saying that the Oscars have become debased, which is what the argument claims.
- (d) This was a surprisingly problematic question for many candidates. Many did not seem familiar with the notion of persuasive language, and therefore did not select appropriate examples. The point of the question was to comment on, and give examples of, sarcastic or pejorative references to the Oscar process and the chosen films, (e.g. 'silly statuette', 'sham', 'circus'); or the ironic use of quotation-marks around 'best'; or the strong disapproval in language like: 'integrity flies out of the window...'.
(See mark scheme.)
- (e) This question applied to the latter half of the argument, i.e. that awards are not appropriate in the film industry because the arts are not like sport. This requires the assumption (or missing premise) that film is an art form; and this was the anticipated answer (worth 3 marks). This proved a difficult question and few answered it correctly. However, other assumptions (in the broader sense of unsupported claims) were also credited provided they related to the relevant part of the argument. (See mark scheme.)

- (f) Most candidates said either that the observation would weaken the argument, e.g. because it showed the Oscar winners were popular; or that it would strengthen the argument by highlighting the link between box-office success and winning Oscars. (Some credit was given where one or the other of these answers was well argued.) A sizeable minority pointed out, instead and correctly, that the observation misses the point of the argument, and therefore neither weakens nor strengthens it significantly. Full credit went to these candidates.

Question 3

The base-line for success in this question was, as always, analysis: recognising the main conclusion and the lines of reasoning leading to it. Only on the basis of a sound analysis can evaluation of an argument be truly successful, and though many candidates did grasp the main structure, many others struggled with the question because their analysis was faulty.

The conclusion is that people should relax, not exercise, in order to maintain good health. The intermediate conclusions are: (IC1) that exercise can do more harm than good, with support offered by paragraphs 2, 3 and 4; and (IC2) that diet is the key to health, based on the 'survey' in paragraph 5.

On the most generous evaluation this is a poor argument. Whether the claims offered as reasons are true or not, they do not support the conclusion. In certain extreme cases exercise could harm certain vulnerable people; but that is not any case against ordinary, moderate exercise in favourable surroundings, done by normal healthy individuals. Some candidates made this point cogently, saying that the examples were extreme and special, and that therefore they did not support the generalisations claimed by the conclusions. However, many missed this line of approach and chose, less effectively, to challenge the reasons given for saying that exercise could be harmful. Many made this challenge on the grounds that there was a lack of statistical evidence, which was not a strong objection to claim that some sports can, and sometimes do, cause injury etc. Figures are not really needed.

Statistics are used to support IC2, and many candidates challenged the 'survey' for not being representative. In fact, 2000 is not a particularly small sample for the purpose. The real problem lies in the conclusion drawn from the results. The fact that the healthiest percentile ate well does not mean they did not also exercise, nor that their diet was the cause or the 'key factor' behind their alleged good health. Most candidates also made one or both of these points.

A clear analysis of the argument and three or four valid points of evaluation were needed to achieve the highest score, with additional marks available for relevant, well developed further arguments, for or against the conclusion/s. In preparing candidates for this question it is very important to emphasise that they should meet all of these three requirements. It is not necessary to present them in this order, or as separate sections. The markscheme allows credit to be given for further argument arising indirectly from an evaluation point; and/or for a candidate's understanding of the structure to be exhibited in what he or she says in criticising it. But it is a safer strategy, on the candidate's part, to explicitly address all three components. The best essays tended to be those that unmistakably gave: an accurate reconstruction of the argument structure (not a summary of the text); a discussion of its weakness, flaws, and assumptions; two or more further points which could be brought against or in defence of it.

Conclusion

Examiners were impressed by the clarity and fluency of English. Although the quality of expression is not itself the basis for any component of the marking – the exam is an assessment of thinking critically, not of English – it is obviously to every candidate's advantage to make their observations clear so that they can receive the credit they deserve. With very few exceptions, the standard of written English usage, grammar and punctuation was more than adequate for this purpose.