

Examiners' Report
January 2012

GCE General Studies 6GS01 01

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Publications Code US030477

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Introduction

The majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions in each of the three sections of the paper. Maximum or near maximum marks were achieved by some candidates in each section. In section A, fewer marks than average were awarded for questions relating to the scientific method. Questions about fact, opinion and informal argument types were awarded better than average marks. In section B, many candidates achieved maximum marks on questions requiring short answers but scored less well on questions 27 and 28 which required more extended answers. Most candidates attempted both short essays in section C, suggesting that candidates are continuing to manage their time well. As in previous papers, marks for Quality of Written Communication (QWC) were awarded for the two longer answers in section B and the two essays in section C. Across the paper 14 marks out of 90 can be awarded for QWC. Some candidates lost a significant number of QWC marks because of poor spelling or syntax.

Question 21

This question required candidates to select the relevant information from the source and then perform a simple division. Although full marks were awarded for a bald correct answer, no marks were awarded for a bald incorrect answer. Candidates should be encouraged to note the figures they are using and show how they arrive at their answer. Intermediate marks are awarded for selecting the correct figures even if the final answer is wrong.

21 Use the information in paragraph 1 to calculate the cost of imprisonment per prisoner per year in 2010.

$$\frac{\pounds 3,000,000}{85,000} = \pounds 35.29/\text{year}$$



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer uses a figure of £3 million instead of £3 billion leading to an answer of £35, rather than the correct answer of £35 000. When answering questions involving numerical calculations, candidates should be encouraged to consider whether their answers fall within a sensible range. Compared to the cost of everyday consumer items or services this answer is clearly wrong and should have alerted the candidate to check their selection of data and subsequent calculation.

21 Use the information in paragraph 1 to calculate the cost of imprisonment per prisoner per year in 2010.

$$\pounds 3,000,000,000 \div 85,000 = \pounds 352,941 \text{ per prisoner}$$



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Although the final calculation misplaces the decimal point, this answer was awarded 2 marks for selecting the correct information and for demonstrating a correct method of calculation.

Question 22

Candidates were asked to select three purposes of imprisonment mentioned in the source. Thus no marks were given for purposes not mentioned in the source.

22 From Source 1, identify three purposes of imprisonment.

- 1 Locking criminals away stops them offending
- 2 It may satisfy our desire for retribution against those who have committed serious offences.
- 3 Crime rates fall when prison sentences have increased



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has correctly identified prevention of offending and retribution. A fall in crime rates was not accepted as an answer because imprisonment as a punishment is applied to individuals in specific cases.

Question 23

This question required candidates to select an argument from analogy from paragraph 2. The "arms race" mentioned in the source suggests a comparison with increasing expenditure on prisons and implies the conclusion that both were futile.

23 Write out an argument from analogy used in paragraph 2.

"Despite this obvious failure of the penal policy, British politicians have engaged in what has been described as an "arms race" as they compete to throw ever more public money into the prison building programme."



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Quote includes "arms race" so gets a mark.

Question 24

Candidates were asked to name three punishments which can be imposed as alternatives to imprisonment in British courts. A small number of candidates described various forms of the death penalty or mutilation, which have not been in use in Britain for many years. A relatively large number of candidates incorrectly mentioned parole rather than probation or a suspended sentence. House arrest was also mentioned in some answers. House arrest is not used as an alternative to imprisonment but is sometimes used to impose restrictions when awaiting trial.

24 Write down three punishments in current use in the UK, which can be imposed as alternatives to imprisonment for offenders in British courts.

1. ~~one~~ social behaviour disorder

2. community service work - not payed

3. on parole



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This answer gained 1 mark for community service. Some similar answers such as public service, or even civil service, were not awarded this mark.

1. Rehabilitating or re-educateing prisoner

2. Community service e.g. picking up litter

3. House arrest - where you are unable to leave



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Rehabilitation or re-education on their own did not gain a mark. Marks were awarded for a more specific answer such as a drug rehabilitation programme. Community service gets a mark but house arrest does not.

Question 25

This question asked candidates to explain "parole" and why offenders on parole might be recalled to prison. Many candidates gave a good description of parole, including good behaviour by prisoners leading to early release. Fewer candidates gained marks for describing why prisoners might be recalled, such as breaking specific parole conditions. A small number of answers suggested that parole applied when a sentence had been completed. There was also some confusion between parole and probation imposed as a sentence, suggesting that these candidates had not read the question carefully.

25 In the context of the British prison system, explain the term 'parole' and why a prisoner released on parole might be recalled to prison.

Parole is when you are released from prison on the understanding that if you commit another crime while released you will be put straight back into prison. You are usually allowed parole for good behaviour while in prison, but if you offend while on parole you will be recalled to prison.



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This answer was awarded two marks for mention of release for good behaviour and recall for offending.

Parole is where a prisoner is released back into society for demonstrating good behaviour etc. after serving part of their sentence, a prisoner might be recalled to the prison if they fail to attend parole meetings with their parole officer, or violate the terms of their parole in any way.
e.g. re-offending



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This answer gained four marks for describing early release for good behaviour, describing a specific parole violation (missing meetings) and also for mention of reoffending.

Question 26

Candidates were asked to identify links between homelessness and imprisonment from the source. Answers which made general comments about homeless people committing offences, so that they could enjoy the supposed benefits of imprisonment, were not awarded marks. The source specifically identifies the level of homelessness amongst released prisoners as 30% and also refers to destitute ex-servicemen.

26 From the passage, identify two possible links between homelessness and imprisonment.

1. A lot of homeless people have served their time in prison and have nowhere to live after they get out. ~~But~~ 'When released, 30% of prisoners have nowhere to live'
2. 'Many of the destitute on our streets or clogging up the prison system are ex-servicemen, unable to reintegrate into society.'



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This answer correctly identified the two relevant quotes from the passage and was awarded 2 marks.

26 From the passage, identify two possible links between homelessness and imprisonment.

1. They are ex-servicemen, unable to reintegrate into society
2. They have a drug problem, a very poor standard of education and suffer from mental illness.



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This answer did not gain any marks. The first answer misses the crucial point that the ex-servicemen are "destitute", while the second answer simply gives an irrelevant quote from the source.

Question 27

Candidates were asked to identify and evaluate the comparisons made between the penal system in Britain and elsewhere. Many candidates took this to mean that the penal systems should be evaluated, rather than the comparisons. Candidates who identified the selectivity of the comparisons, or their dependence on population size were able to gain marks for evaluation. Answers which compared the range of available sentences, such as the use of the death penalty in the USA, were limited to the marks for identifying.

27 The author compares aspects of the penal system in Britain with systems in other countries.

Identify and evaluate these comparisons.

In the first paragraph, the writer says "We [the UK] already spend more of our money on the prison system than the USA or any other EU country." This is a fair statistic as it compares to a range of other countries, with bigger and smaller populations than our own.

In the last paragraph, the author writes "Compared to Holland, France and Switzerland, we imprison almost 50% more offenders, yet our rate of reoffending is the highest." This is a less reliable statistic as it only includes 3 other countries. We ~~may~~ have a better record than the rest of the countries in the world but we are not told about these. The author wants to shock with this statistic and it works.



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Examiner Comments

This answer gained full marks for both identifying the two comparisons and also for evaluating their validity. In the first comparison with the USA, population size is mentioned which is relevant because the source simply says "...we spend more of our money..." without saying whether this is in terms of an absolute amount, such as per capita of population or per capita of prison population. In the second case the possibly selective nature of the comparison with only three countries gains a mark.

Question 28

This question asked candidates to assess the strength of the evidence used in the passage. The responses to this question were markedly better than the responses to similar questions in previous series. Candidates who were able to correctly identify various pieces of evidence as fact and opinion were able to score 4 marks out of 5. An additional mark was available for answers which identified Ken Clarke's comment as an argument from authority, or which made a further explanatory comment about fact compared to opinion. Answers which did not pick up on these specific marking points were limited to 2 marks for content.

28 The author uses different types of evidence (including arguments) to support the conclusion that "...we need more effective ways of dealing with crime".

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of these different types of evidence, using examples from the passage.

I think that using facts and statistics is a strong type of evidence as it gives the reader a clear view of how many prisoners there are - 'The prison population in Britain soared to 85000 in 2010' sounds a lot stronger than 'There were many people in prison in 2010'. It also gives an idea of how much keeping prisons is costing us (rather than saying "a lot of money" it gives an exact figure.)

The author uses arguments to support his evidence for example, he says "despite this obvious failure ~~of~~ of penal policy, British politicians have engaged in what has been described as an "arms race". The term obvious failure is based on opinion, but backs up the author's ~~of~~ facts and statistics.

The author also uses quotes, this helps as it may sway the audience one way or another if they like the person he is quoting. For example he says 'As Ken Clarke said in 2010, banging up criminals may make us feel better but we need more effective ways of dealing with crime'. This backs the author up as it shows the audience that other people share his opinion.

(Total for Question 28 = 8 marks)



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Examiner Comments

This answer gained full marks for both content and QWC.

Question 29

Candidates were asked to assess the strength of the claim that we should stop all scientific research because it just caused problems such as global warming or over-population. Most candidates were able to present at least some relevant comments and a simple argument or conclusion. Answers which scored marks at the lower end of the range were often limited to commenting on the issues raised in the question stem, did not distinguish between science and technology, and did not make any comment about how decisions about using science or technology were made. Answers gaining average marks often expanded on the issues raised in the question stem but balanced these against benefits, most commonly better health and increased longevity. Answers at the top end of the range often drew very clear distinctions between science and technology and mentioned the unpredictability of scientific research.

Question 30

Candidates were asked to assess the extent to which the UK could be described as a secular state. Answers which scored marks at the lower end of the range often misunderstood the meaning of "secular", for example describing the UK as less secular because fewer people were religious. Answers gaining average marks often expanded on the issues raised in the question stem but often linked secularism with atheism, rather than with a division between church and state. Answers at the top end of the range often demonstrated a clear understanding of secularism and frequently concluded that, although the UK cannot be described as a secular state, the church has little or no influence on the state. The best answers often made detailed comparisons between the UK and other countries with explicitly secular constitutions such as France or the USA.

Paper Summary

1. When answering multiple choice questions, you should read all four answers before choosing the one you think is correct. If you are not sure then try to eliminate the answers which you think are definitely wrong and then choose between the remaining answers. Answer all 20 multiple choice questions even if you have to guess.
2. The suggestions in the paper about how much to spend on each section reflect the marks available in each section. Section C contributes 40 out of the 90 marks for the whole paper, so try to spend about 20 minutes on each essay.
3. In sections B and C, 14 of the available marks are for Quality of Written Communication. You can lose a significant number of marks for poor spelling, grammar or punctuation, especially if it makes it more difficult for the examiner to understand what you have written.
4. When asked to select evidence from source material, you will not get any marks for quoting evidence which is not in the source or for giving your own opinion, even if the evidence is relevant.
5. Be careful not to repeat the same answer. For example, if asked for alternatives to imprisonment, "probation" and "suspended sentence" mean the same thing.
6. If asked to give 3 answers, do not put a list which contains more than 3 answers, because any incorrect answer will mean a mark is deducted.
7. If you are asked to assess the strength of evidence in a source, you can gain good marks by quoting evidence and identifying evidence as fact or opinion. You can also get marks for identifying and commenting on argument by analogy or argument from authority.

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Order Code US030477 January 2012

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