

OCR A2 Critical Thinking

Unit F504: Critical Reasoning

Student Workbook

Teacher Notes

Section 1: Building on what you know	3
Section 2: Analysis of argument	4
Section 3: Evaluation	7
Section 4: Writing your own extended argument	15
Section 5: Practice examination paper	18

Introduction

This is the second of two workbooks designed to support and complement A2 courses in Critical Thinking for the OCR 2008 specification. The aims of this one are to help students practise the skills required in Unit F504 of the course and to provide them with essential information, tips and useful examples.

Sections 1 to 4

The exercises begin with one to demonstrate to students that they already have many of the critical reasoning skills required for Unit F504:

- AO1: analysis of the structure of arguments
- AO2: evaluation of arguments, identifying their strengths and weaknesses
- AO3: writing their own arguments and communicating effectively

All these skills will be further developed so that they can apply them in a sophisticated way to the more challenging material found in Unit F504.

Section 2 begins by reminding them of the components of argument learnt for Units F501 and F502, and then extends their knowledge so that they can identify other elements such as scene setting, strands of argument and moves. At A2 candidates are expected to analyse the structure of whole paragraphs or strands of argument as well as answering the more familiar type of shorter questions which ask them, for example, to identify the role in the structure of a quoted phrase.

Likewise Section 3 builds upon the strengths and flaws in reasoning taught at AS, introducing students to forms of deductive reasoning and offering guidance as to how to evaluate whole strands of reasoning which may not be obviously flawed.

Section 4 teaches them how to write more extended and complex arguments than were required for Unit F502. They will learn to do this gradually, by practising structured tasks first.

Section 5: Practice examination paper

Once students have practised each skill, the workbook provides a full-length practice paper modelled on the specimen paper supplied by the OCR examination board. Be aware that real examination papers vary a little from year to year, and can differ considerably from the specimen, so provide candidates with as much practice as you can and create opportunities for them to study mark schemes and examiners' comments. Ideally they should try to complete the paper in 1 hour 30 minutes, the time allocated to the examination in this unit. The Philip Allan Updates publication *OCR AS/A-Level Critical Thinking Exam Revision Notes* by Jill Swale provides further detailed advice of exactly what they need to do to obtain high marks in the examination and offers further practice and worked examples.

After using the workbook students should take every opportunity to practise their skills by applying them to persuasive material they encounter in daily life, such as politicians' speeches, arguments in newspapers and on the internet, classroom debates and informal discussions.

We hope this workbook will help them in their studies and in their examination.

Section 1: Building on what you know

Exercise 1

Suggested answers

- 1 We have to fight anti-abortion amendments put to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. ‘We have to fight them’ is too vague, but the word ‘them’ could be replaced by alternative phrases such as ‘Labour MPs’ bid to cut women’s access to abortion’.
- 2 (That is why) any attack on abortion rights is a political attack on the working class.
- 3 The first paragraph is scene setting. It provides background information about why the abortion debate is of current interest and it acts as a lead-in to the argument itself.
- 4 ‘Pandering to the bigots’ is an appeal to emotion, intended to arouse the reader’s hostility to the cabinet’s action. It implies that cabinet members who pushed for MPs to have a free vote on abortion were deeply prejudiced against abortion, and that Brown only agreed to this to win popularity, against his better judgement.
- 5 The third paragraph contains a series of analogies expressed in the form of rhetorical questions. The writer implies that three issues: going to war, cutting disability benefits and privatisation of schools, are as much ‘issues of conscience’ as abortion, yet MPs are expected to vote with their party on these issues and not on abortion, suggesting there is worrying inconsistency in how the government organises voting procedures.

The analogy is moderately effective in that all four issues can potentially lead to human suffering, though the author only makes this fully explicit in one case, the reference to war killing ‘millions of people’ (rather a sweeping generalisation). ‘Selling off schools to used-car salesmen’ is a straw person, ridiculing the purchase of failing schools by entrepreneurs with an extreme example. The writer assumes the reader will automatically disapprove of the cutting of disability benefits (ignoring the possibility that this may be to encourage less severely disabled people to take what work they can manage). The similarity between these issues and abortion is not spelt out, perhaps because to explore why abortion arouses so much emotion might elicit the very ideas about it which the writer opposes.

To sum up, there are probably more similarities than differences between these issues, but the author could have made these more explicit and made a more convincing case by avoiding ridicule and exaggeration.

- 6 The move from issues of conscience to political ones is not handled very clearly. The author’s analogy between abortion and three other topics is likely to have the effect of persuading the reader that they are all ‘issues of conscience’. The subsequent claim that ‘abortion is not a “moral” issue’ then reads like a contradiction, if the terms ‘moral issue’ and ‘issue of conscience’ are intended to carry the same meaning. It is also unclear how the author distinguishes them from ‘political’ issues. Definitions would help. If we take it that ‘political’ means relating to unequal distribution of power, then the argument that abortion is such a case is reasonably made with the reference to women’s ‘right to control their bodies’, but the other issues too relate to power relations. The claim that ‘abortion is not a “moral” issue — it is a

political one' is not well supported. The author seems to make a clearer case that abortion (and the three other instances cited) are both moral and political issues, as all have the potential to harm or help people as well as relating to the distribution of power.

- 7 The writer's view that that 'any attack on abortion rights is a political attack on the working class' is supported by a sweeping generalisation that 'Rich women have always been able to get access to abortion, whether at private clinics or by travelling abroad.' The case would be more convincing if evidence were provided, though by its very nature such evidence could be hard to come by. It is probably truer to say that, because illegal abortions cost money, wealthier women have sometimes found it easier to access them, though still at considerable risk to their health. Travelling abroad would not have been easy for women of any class until at least the nineteenth century. Furthermore, wealth is not the only factor influencing access to abortion, since youth, inexperience, ethnicity, locality and personal networks are all likely to affect women's ability to seek and obtain illegal abortions. The writer's insistence that this is only a class issue is biased.
- 8 The source is *Socialist Worker*, which advertises itself as an 'anti-capitalist, revolutionary weekly'. Clearly Marxism affects the writer's stance, as social class is viewed as the central issue in the abortion debate. This is illustrated by the suggestion that legislation to limit abortion is 'a political attack on the working class'.

Section 2: Analysis of argument

Exercise 2

Part A

- 1 After the introductory first paragraph which sets the scene, in the second the writer claims that the EMA is a good scheme but that how it is implemented could be improved. The first major strand argues for the advantages of the EMA scheme in supporting poorer students. The third paragraph, after a little more scene setting, introduces a new strand in reasoning, identifying weaknesses in the way the scheme is currently implemented and their ill effects. In a third strand of argument in the fourth paragraph, the author hypothesises about ways in which genuine commitment to courses could be psychologically tested but points out the drawbacks of two possible schemes and a problem with the testing idea as a whole. A new strand of reasoning in paragraph 5 begins with an analogy likening lack of motivation of under-16 students with some EMA students, concluding that the teaching of neither should be abandoned, then moves to the duty of teachers to motivate even reluctant students. In the final strand the author suggests the improvement in the way the scheme could be implemented flagged up at the beginning of the second paragraph and anticipates more satisfactory results.

Part B

- 2** The first paragraph is scene setting. It provides enough detail about the EMA scheme for readers unfamiliar with it to follow the argument. The phrases ‘scene setting’, ‘explanation’ or ‘context’ alone would earn 1 mark only. An explanation in the context of this argument is needed to score 2 marks.
- 3** Award 2 marks for ‘the government needs to advise schools to adopt the new approach (or a synonym) as soon as possible’.
- A student who quoted the final sentence exactly should only be rewarded with 1 mark, as the word ‘it’ is too vague.
- 4** This is an intermediate conclusion. It is supported by the first strand of reasoning outlining the benefits of the scheme and later strands showing its drawbacks and suggesting an improvement. (2 marks) Award 1 mark only for the words ‘intermediate conclusion’ if not accompanied by an explanation in context.
- 5** Paragraph 4 consists of sustained suppositional reasoning. The author considers two types of psychological tests that could potentially be conducted to identify and resolve the problem of academically unmotivated EMA students, but then identifies problems of both types of tests and the idea of testing as a whole. Having been explored hypothetically, the notion of testing is then dismissed. Award 1 mark for the correct identification of suppositional reasoning and up to 2 further marks for an explanation that shows the student understands the nature and purpose of suppositional reasoning in this context.
- 6** ‘We need to accept that there will always be a few unmotivated students post-16, just as there are many in the younger age groups. We do not abandon education below 16 because some students truant or fail to pay attention in class and we should not abandon the EMA scheme for a similar reason.’ Award 1 mark to a candidate who correctly quotes both sentences or refers to the first two sentences in paragraph 5. Award further marks for a good explanation such as the following: The author draws a parallel between the lack of motivation or poor attendance of students under 16 and those over 16 receiving the EMA. Schools do not abandon provisions for these younger students on the grounds of less than 100% success rate. Neither should the EMA scheme be abandoned simply because some students funded by it do not achieve their full potential.
- 7** This is a principle (1 mark). To be awarded a second mark, students need to identify that it acts as a reason to support the intermediate conclusion of the sentence that follows: ‘Then the minority who choose to continue their education primarily for financial reasons may find they enjoy studying more than they expected.’
- 8** Mark the answer by first placing it in a level according to the OCR level descriptors that follow. A possible model answer is supplied below.

Level 4: 10–12 marks

- Candidates demonstrate thorough understanding of argument structure, including some complexity.
- They are able to identify elements of complex reasoning accurately, using appropriate terminology.
- Mistakes are rare and not serious.

Level 3: 7–9 marks

- Candidates demonstrate a clear understanding of argument structure.
- They are able to identify most elements of reasoning accurately, using appropriate terminology.
- They may make mistakes, occasionally serious ones.

Level 2: 4–6 marks

- Candidates demonstrate basic understanding of argument structure.
- They are able to identify some elements of complex reasoning, accurately using appropriate terminology.
- They may mix this with gist and misunderstanding.

Level 1: 1–3 marks

- Candidates demonstrate weak, limited understanding of argument structure.
- They may provide poor paraphrases of isolated elements of arguments or give overall gist.

0 marks

- No creditworthy material.

Model answer:

The first sentence is scene setting, providing further background information to help readers follow the ensuing argument. The second is an intermediate conclusion (IC3) supported by the reasoning in the rest of the paragraph. The third sentence beginning ‘Some students...’ provides the first reason (R1) why the scheme has problems. Another reason (R2) is presented in the fourth sentence, illustrated by two examples, ‘perhaps because they had a hangover or fancied a lie-in’. The sentence that follows, ‘It appears to be a waste of public money to finance the education of such disaffected students’, acts as an intermediate conclusion (IC1) to these two reasons. Another link in the chain of reasoning is supplied by a third reason why the present implementation of the scheme is flawed: ‘In schools that embrace the bonus scheme, teachers may feel pressurised to mark coursework generously in order for students to receive their bonuses.’ (R3) This leads to another intermediate conclusion (IC2): ‘This is unfair to other students and brings schemes of assessment into disrepute.’

In terms of the hierarchy of reasoning in the paragraph, the two intermediate conclusions in the second half of the passage both support the earlier intermediate conclusion ‘In practice, these aspects can lead to problems.’ (IC3)

Section 3: Evaluation

Evaluation skills needed for A2

Exercise 3

- 1 As an example of a strike that may have affected readers recently, this is a good choice likely to arouse interest. However, there is no discussion of other strikes or the general principles behind striking. Using this sole example throughout the passage to condemn striking is a significant weakness as it is unlikely to be typical of all strikes.
- 2 On the one hand, it is true that workers now are unlikely to have their pay reduced. On the other, the Tolpuddle Martyrs were inadequately paid even before their wages were cut and many workers today, such as those on minimum wages, could still argue that they are inadequately paid and are unlikely to have their grievances recognised unless they take industrial action. The differences may not be as great as the writer suggests.
- 3 The writer's intention is to discredit those who celebrate the Tolpuddle Martyrs and, by extension, those who support strikes, by ridiculing them. She does so by using rhetorical language, arousing dislike against those performing at the festival with the loaded words 'rant', 'squawk', 'daub', 'spewings' and 'maudlin'.
- 4 The writer describes a working class that is 'doing very nicely thank you and has no interest in taking radical action'. This is clearly a sweeping generalisation as it patently does not apply to the Underground drivers. Furthermore, the writer predicts strikes by other workers in the final paragraph.
- 5 While there is some truth in the first part of the statement, some people's circumstances give them little choice of employment and they have to take what they can. The writer overlooks the fact that a pay rate that might be reasonable at the time it is agreed may not be appropriate several years later when the cost of living has risen. The false assumption is also made that strikes are always about pay. Sometimes workers strike about an incident of unfairness or changed conditions.
- 6 There is no evidence given in the passage that the strike was solely about pay so the comparison could be irrelevant. (In fact it was about job losses too.) Even if pay were the only issue, it would be difficult to assess which of these jobs is the more 'responsible', and tube drivers have the expense of living in London as well. The point about the length of training is more convincing but only one factor. This is an analogy.
- 7 While people now do tend to be more geographically mobile, many prefer to stay where they have friends and family and it is unreasonable to expect workers to uproot themselves and their families whenever their pay fails to keep pace with inflation. This point therefore gives only weak support to the claim that there is no need for pay disputes. The analogy between workers and children is a poor one as the cases being described are too different to support the argument: the sulky child is discontented about a gift that he has not earned, whereas workers expect decent pay in exchange for their labour.

- 8 The evidence fails to support the generalisation that striking as a whole should be illegal as, after the first sentence, it only provides evidence of the effects of 2 days in one dispute. The ‘untold’ suffering claimed is not well supported, as only two accidents and one near-accident are described. Two of these could be blamed on impatient motorists (they may well have happened if there had been no strike) and are not directly the fault of the strikers. The initial point that ‘striking is entirely selfish as it is a deliberate attempt to disrupt the lives of the innocent’ is rather a subjective one — many acts are selfish but they are not necessarily made criminal.
- 9 The claim that ‘society is becoming far too materialistic’ is used to condemn greedy strikers, as if money is of little importance. This is undermined by the reference to the cost of the strike. If striking is wrong because it wastes money, then money is important after all.
- 10 People who claim for compensation from accidents might justifiably be described as materialistic if the accidents really were their own fault, but it is unlikely that their claim would be successful if this was the case. Binge drinkers are an inappropriate example as there is no clear connection with money or protest, only the tenuous link with their rights to treatment. Neither is the reference to animal liberationists apt, as the rights they campaign for are those of animals, not people. These are poorly chosen examples that fail to support the claim.
- 11 The writer brings in Marx to link strikers with communism, which many British people distrust, but fails to make a clear connection between Marx’s ideas and modern ‘clamouring for human rights’. There have been many influences on radical thought since Marx. An *ad hominem* flaw is used to discredit Marx’s views, as his procreative activities are of no relevance to his writings. This allusion is therefore ineffective in supporting the argument to make strikes illegal.
- 12 Slippery slope reasoning is employed, as there is a chain of reasoning with weak links. There is no certainty that strikes will become commonplace, or if they do that essential services will be jeopardised or that millions will die from swine fever as a result. Alternatively this flaw could be described as an unjustified prediction or appeal to fear, and it is based on several shaky assumptions. There is also bias and an appeal to emotion in the loaded phrase ‘gleefully threatening’. The final sentence has a restricted choices flaw, as there could be other options besides suffering the consequences of strikes and sending strikers to prison, such as different types of punishment, sacking, fining the union or improving arbitration.
- 13 (a) Although most of the evidence and examples used in the passage are poor, the use of the tube drivers’ strike throughout the argument to represent all strikes is a major weakness. No single example could give adequate support to an argument to ban all strikes, but this is a particularly untypical example as it had the capacity to affect an enormous number of people very quickly (even though the ensuing chaos could have been described far more effectively). The writer also fails to make the causes of the strike clear to the reader, writing solely about greed for higher pay without establishing this as the sole reason. Because the evidence from this strike cannot be convincingly extrapolated to striking in general, this has a major impact in weakening the argument against strikes.

- (b)** For the argument against strikes to be convincing, the assumption has to be made that strikes are unjustified. The writer's comment that workers make an agreement with their employer about how much they will be paid takes no account of future developments. It makes the unjustified assumptions that there will be no rise in the cost of living, that work conditions will be as expected and that there will be no unfairness by the employer. This cannot be the case in all instances. Likewise, the writer generalises as if all workers have a choice of work and can easily move around in search of better paid employment. These assumptions and generalisations show no awareness of conditions in the real world and fail to show that striking is unnecessary. Their impact is to significantly weaken the argument.
- (c)** The writer's frequent use of rhetoric such as loaded language, appeals to emotion, *ad hominem* and slippery slope show a bias that generally weakens her credibility. In addition, there are several paragraphs of reasoning relating to the Tolpuddle Martyrs that fails to convince because the differences between the Dorset labourers and modern strikers are not as great as the writer suggests. This weakens a considerable section of her argument, having a significant impact on the whole.

The restricted choices flaw at the beginning and end is also a major source of weakness. The argument implies that either we have to put up with the chaos of strikes or strikers must be imprisoned. Even if the argument convinces us that striking should be banned, no specific evidence or reasoning is provided as to why imprisonment should be the penalty for breaking this law.

Trying exam-style questions

Exercise 4

- 1 'It's time the government forced schools to prioritise working-class underachievement instead of catering for the needs of ethnic minorities.' (2 marks) Allow 1 mark for a fairly accurate paraphrase.
- 2 'The nation can no longer afford to neglect the educational needs of this vulnerable group.' (2 marks) Allow 1 mark for a fairly accurate paraphrase.
- 3 This is evidence. (1 mark) With other data in the same paragraph, it supports the reason for giving priority to working-class children: 'Recent figures show that the attainment gap between children of different classes is widening.' (1 mark) Total 2 marks.
- 4 Hypothetical reasoning. (1 mark) It conjectures about the future, acting as an intermediate conclusion in the chain of reasoning supporting the further intermediate conclusion that 'this politically correct nonsense has to stop'. (1 mark) Total 2 marks.
- 5 Principle (moral or general). (1 mark) It acts as a reason supporting the intermediate conclusion that the vulnerable group must not be neglected. (1 mark) Total 2 marks.
- 6 Mark the answer by placing the student in an appropriate band, using the criteria below. A suggestion for a full Level 3 answer is supplied for guidance, but it is unlikely that many students would be able to write as much as this in the time limit. Other convincing points should of course be given credit.

Level 3: 7–10 marks

- Candidates demonstrate sound, thorough and perceptive evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the author's reasoning with consistent and accomplished evaluation of their impact on the support for the claim.
- They select key points to evaluate.
- Inappropriate forms of evaluation are rare and not serious.
- Candidates have evaluated the support for the author's claim, making some relevant points to support their evaluation.

Level 2: 4–6 marks

- Candidates demonstrate a clear evaluation of the weaknesses in the author's reasoning and some clarity in evaluation of strengths.
- They select points to evaluate but not always key points.
- Inappropriate forms of evaluation (such as false attribution of weakness) may occur.
- Candidates have made a mixture of relevant evaluation and inappropriate or irrelevant points.

Level 1: 1–3 marks

- Candidates demonstrate basic or limited awareness of strengths and weaknesses in the author's reasoning.
- Valid points may be isolated, and candidates may have little awareness of the impact on the overall reasoning.
- Candidates make the odd relevant point amidst description and irrelevance.

0 marks

- No creditworthy material.

Model answer:

Stead's argument is well supported by information about changes in the educational system and educational statistics in paragraphs 2 to 4, suggesting a degree of expertise. However it begins with a restricted choice flaw, as no reason is given why schools should not give attention to the needs of both ethnic minorities and working-class students.

The title refers to help required by working-class boys, and paragraph 8 to white working-class boys, but the evidence of working-class disadvantage relates to both sexes, providing no reason why boys in particular should be targeted. This conflation of working-class boys and working-class children weakens the argument. Confusion about group identities is also apparent in the lack of recognition that many ethnic minority children, especially Afro-Caribbeans, are also working class, making nonsense of the conclusion that schools should prioritise working-class underachievement *instead of* catering for the needs of ethnic minorities.

The writer's lack of objectivity about his topic emerges in the loaded language in paragraph 5 ('a lot of fuss'), which gives insufficient weight to two examples of possible discrimination. This is inconsistent with the equal opportunities stance he takes on the class issue. His claim that schools do not need to resource English as an Additional Language is inadequately supported by

the reason that most ethnic minority children have spoken English since infancy, as sometimes they may still have a more limited vocabulary than children whose parents speak English in the home. Evidence that just members of one ethnic group, Indians, are successful in GCSEs is irrelevant to the suggested abandonment of black Saturday schools (since these are usually set up by Afro-Caribbean parents) and inadequate support for the wider implication that a focus on ethnic minority needs is no longer necessary.

In contrast the writer shows bias in favour of working-class children. Though he refers to a sociologist's conclusion, the description of children's lives seems to be Stead's own as it is based on sweeping generalisations ('helping on a market stall at the weekend', 'noisy living room in front of the telly', paragraph 6) which are less convincing than the statistical evidence supplied earlier. To sum up, in this section of the argument he fails to make a clear case for prioritising working-class boys or children over ethnic minority children.

7 Mark the answer by placing the student in an appropriate band, using the criteria below. A suggestion for a full Level 3 answer is supplied for guidance, but it is unlikely that many students would be able to write as much as this in the time limit. Other convincing points should of course be given credit.

Level 3: 7–10 marks

- Candidates demonstrate sound, thorough and perceptive evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the author's reasoning in his move from the observation that white working-class youth are marginalised in schools to the claim that ends paragraph 8.
- They select key points to evaluate.
- Inappropriate forms of evaluation are rare and not serious.
- Candidates have evaluated the author's move from one claim to another, making some relevant points to support their evaluation.

Level 2: 4–6 marks

- Candidates demonstrate a clear evaluation of the weaknesses in the author's reasoning in his move and some clarity in evaluation of strengths.
- They select points to evaluate but not always key points.
- Inappropriate forms of evaluation (such as false attribution of weakness) may occur.
- Candidates have made a mixture of relevant evaluation and inappropriate or irrelevant points.

Level 1: 1 to 3 marks

- Candidates demonstrate basic or limited awareness of strengths and weaknesses in the author's reasoning.
- Valid points may be isolated, and candidates may have little awareness of the impact on the overall reasoning.
- Candidates make the odd relevant point amidst description and irrelevance.

0 marks

- No creditworthy material.

Model answer:

Paragraph 7 implies that the underachievement of working-class youth is a result of marginalisation by a multicultural curriculum but gives no evidence that this is the case. Low attainment could stem from the poor domestic conditions described in paragraph 6 or other causes, such as attitudes, that Stead fails to explore. If the ethnic minority focus of the curriculum has failed to bring success to Afro-Caribbeans, it is illogical to believe that it is influential enough to have disadvantaged white children or that restoring a ‘traditional British curriculum’ would bring them success. It seems more likely that this aspect of the curriculum has little effect on either group and that their problems have other causes. In any case the multicultural curriculum should perhaps be continued to help different groups empathise with each other; it is certainly likely to be more motivating and relevant than a curriculum from the 1950s.

Stead then makes a move that is inconsistent with his claims in paragraph 5 in two ways. There he suggested that ethnic minorities have no need of help because of their success, whereas in paragraph 7 he refers to Afro-Caribbean underachievement and suggests that the curriculum designed to include them should be abandoned. He also implies that relative failure by some is inevitable and even desirable to fill the worse jobs in society (‘everybody can’t be top of the class’), a position that he then contradicts in the final paragraph in relation to white working-class boys: ‘It is the duty of schools to promote equality, offering greater opportunities to those whose home backgrounds provide little support.’ The dire consequences he predicts for white working-class boys who fail at school (and why just boys?) would be equally applicable to ethnic minority boys (or children) and the conclusion that the nation cannot afford to neglect ‘this vulnerable group’ is equally true for both.

In conclusion, Stead’s use of the multicultural curriculum as evidence of ‘political correctness’ disadvantaging the working class is unconvincing. His move from this to a dismissal of ethnic minority needs and prioritising of the white working class is illogically argued.

Evaluating a second, linked argument

Exercise 5

Apply the following guidelines to place the candidate’s answer within a level. A thorough sample answer is supplied below, though students are unlikely to manage all these points in limited time.

Level 3: 9–12 marks

- Candidates demonstrate sound, thorough and perceptive evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the author’s reasoning, cogently comparing the quality of her argument with that of the argument to which she is responding.
- They select key points to evaluate da Ruhls’ argument as a whole.
- Inappropriate forms of evaluation are rare and not serious.

Level 2: 5–8 marks

- Candidates demonstrate a clear evaluation of the weaknesses in the author’s reasoning and some clarity in evaluation of strengths.

- There is some attempt to compare the quality of the argument to that of the preceding one.
- They select points to evaluate but not always key points.
- Inappropriate forms of evaluation (such as false attribution of weakness) may occur.
- Candidates have made a mixture of relevant evaluation and inappropriate or irrelevant points.

Level 1: 1–4 marks

- Candidates demonstrate basic or limited awareness of strengths and weaknesses in the author's reasoning but neglect to compare the two arguments.
- Valid points may be isolated, and candidates may have little awareness of the impact on the overall reasoning.
- Candidates make the odd relevant point amidst description and irrelevance.

0 marks

- No creditworthy material.

Model answer:

In her first two paragraphs da Ruhls makes a perceptive point in identifying Stead's inconsistency about advocating help to one underachieving group but not another. She is herself more consistent in taking the same line throughout: support for girls.

She effectively identifies another flaw in Stead's argument in her third paragraph, pointing out how he conflates 'children' and 'boys', but her own argument has a similar weakness in dealing with categories, as she overlooks the fact that half the working class, whom she deems a lost cause unworthy of help, are girls.

Like Stead, she shows some expertise in her use of statistics but the evidence she refers to from sociological research does not convincingly support her case. Hyman's study is American and dated so it may not be relevant to working-class attitudes today. The Sue Sharpe study was of working-class girls, undermining her claim that the working class 'has continued to fail'.

She makes sweeping generalisations about the sexes, just as Stead did about working-class children on market stalls. 'Girls are cleverer than boys' cannot be established as a fact that 'we all know' simply on the basis of GCSE and A-level results for one year. The claim that 'boys aren't even trying' is similarly overdrawn.

The evidence given for female potential in paragraph 5 is poorly chosen. The jobs mentioned in which women predominate are poorly paid sectors, and while heading a single parent family is certainly a responsibility, it is not a fate that the majority of such women actively choose and not one usually equated with worldly success.

While Stead made quite a good case for prioritising help to the working class in terms of the social cost of failure, da Ruhls makes a poorer one for abandoning them in favour of girls. Her analogy about 'investing more money in a failing bank' is inappropriate. We invest in a bank for our own benefit, not through desire to benefit the bank. In contrast society invests in students through a moral duty to the students as well as in the hope that society will eventually benefit from their useful labours. Unlike a bank, the weaker academically the students are, the more

we need to invest in them in order to receive a reasonable return. Da Ruhls' view that this is an 'irresponsible waste of national resources' is less convincing than Stead's, who demonstrates by reference to heightened risks of crime and suicide why 'the nation can no longer afford to neglect the educational needs of this vulnerable group'.

Despite criticising Stead for using the meritocracy argument inconsistently, for one group and not another ('everybody can't be top of the class'), she herself uses it unjustifiably. After arguing that society is right to reward hard work and skills, which is fair 'providing that everyone has an equal chance to compete in the first place', she naively follows this with the assertion that because state schools are free 'everyone does have the same chance'. This takes no account of the unequal home background of which Stead showed awareness.

To sum up, da Ruhls makes some sound criticisms of Stead's argument, especially his inconsistencies, but her own argument is similarly flawed by sweeping generalisations, misuse of evidence and lack of awareness that students can belong to more than one group (female and working class). Both authors advocate the abandonment of one group of students in favour of another in a way which is poorly justified, but Stead shows a little more social awareness in defending his choice, whereas da Ruhls' position is inhumane, as demonstrated by her callous rhetoric, 'casting pearls before swine'.

Evaluating deductive reasoning

Exercise 6

The arguments have been rephrased in a simpler way in order to reveal the patterns of reasoning.

- 1 People who drink heavily are likely to suffer from liver disease. (Teenagers are people.) More teenagers are drinking heavily so more are likely to suffer from liver disease.
Valid syllogism or affirming the antecedent (*modus ponens*), a valid deduction.
- 2 Alcohol during pregnancy can lead to birth disorders. Drinking no alcohol during pregnancy eliminates birth disorders. Denying the antecedent. Invalid deduction.
- 3 Anyone can easily become addicted to alcohol so children can easily become addicted.
Affirming the antecedent or valid syllogism, as above.
- 4 Early drinking (in France) leads to cirrhosis. UK children are drinking earlier. This will increase cirrhosis. This is a valid syllogism, following the pattern:
As are B
C is A.
Therefore C is B.
- 5 Drinking causes brain damage. Teenagers are increasingly being treated for mental illness so they must be drinking more. This is affirming the consequent, an invalid form of reasoning. An additional flaw is that mental illness is not the same as brain damage (conflation).
- 6 Early introduction to dangerous substances is reprehensible. Alcohol is a dangerous substance, so alcohol's early introduction is reprehensible. This is a valid syllogism.

Section 4: Writing your own extended argument

Exercise 7

A possible answer is as follows:

Developed counter-argument: Some people think that welfare benefits should be withdrawn because people become too dependent on them and do not bother to work.

Response to counter-argument: This is a very negative view of humanity. In our society, work conveys status and most people choose to work if they possibly can. Being at home all day without occupation is boring and lonely, especially for the young, the group most often accused of being work-shy. Furthermore, welfare benefits are not an adequate substitute for wages, except in the case of the most unskilled and irregular work, so anyone who wants to maintain the same standard of living as his peers will find a job if he can.

Intermediate conclusion: Those who voluntarily opt out of work because of the existence of welfare benefits are the exceptions and therefore not an adequate reason for abandoning the system.

Exercise 8

Suggestions are as follows:

1 Title

An argument opposing a law forbidding parents from introducing children to alcohol at home under the age of 15.

2 Introductory scene setting

Concern has been increasing about binge drinking by teenagers and its likely effect on their long-term health. The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, has pointed out the need for action to counteract the problem.

Strand 1

3 Counter-argument

A recent American study has found a correlation between trying alcohol under the age of 15 and alcohol use disorders which persist into adulthood, apparently suggesting that tasting alcohol should be delayed as late as possible.

4 Response to the counter-claim

However, correlation does not prove causation. Without knowing more, it cannot be concluded that it was the early experience of alcohol which caused the subsequent disorders. Even if it was, no details are provided to suggest whether those in the research were first introduced to alcohol by caring parents or in entirely different conditions by their peer group or irresponsible older people.

5 Intermediate conclusion

This research therefore offers inadequate evidence for banning parents from introducing under-15s to alcohol in a moderate and responsible way.

Strand 2

6 An ethical principle opposing government interference in personal choices is libertarianism. (An alternative answer could be human rights, referring to articles about privacy in the home.)

7 Counter-argument

Opponents of this principle are known as paternalists. They believe that the government has the responsibility to protect the young and vulnerable from harming themselves.

8 Response to counter-argument

Although this seems reasonable, what constitutes harm is often a matter of opinion. As responsible adults who are likely to have their children's best interests at heart and know them better than any government official, parents in a democracy ought to be free to bring up their children as they think fit in the privacy of their own home.

9 Intermediate conclusion

Libertarians are right in opposing laws which allow governments to interfere with aspects of child rearing where no harm is intended.

Strand 3

10 There is no point in having laws that cannot be enforced, and it is unlikely that the authorities would know if parents were allowing under-15s to taste alcohol. This could only be discovered if children were routinely questioned, officials made surprise visits to homes or CCTVs were installed there. Any of these would be major breaches of privacy and human rights.

11 Hypothetical reasoning

If parents were imprisoned for such an offence, their children might have to be taken into care, increasing the likelihood of their taking addictive substances to relieve the distress. Even a heavy fine or community service would increase stress in the family, to the detriment of the children.

12 Analogy

Government ministers recently discussed whether to ban the smacking of children by their parents, as this can occasionally lead to child abuse. It was decided that to enforce such an act would involve prying into the privacy of the home and criminalising parents whose only intention was to encourage better behaviour from their children. Light smacking is therefore still legal. By the same token, allowing young children to drink alcohol may occasionally be abused, but the problems of enforcement are identical to those in the smacking scenario.

13 Intermediate conclusion

Clearly laws concerning parents' treatment of their children in the privacy of their home would be difficult to enforce, and the proposed one concerning alcohol is no exception.

14 Final conclusion

Therefore we should oppose the proposed law forbidding parents from introducing children to alcohol at home under the age of 15.

Exercise 9

Mark the essay out of 20 by choosing the best fit from the OCR descriptors for A2 argument writing, which are as follows:

Level 4: 16–20 marks

- Candidates produce cogent, sound and perceptive reasoning using clear strands of reasoning. Reasons and intermediate conclusions give strong support to conclusion and argument structure is accomplished, possibly complex. Blips rare.
- Language clear, precise and capable of dealing with complexity.
- Candidates anticipate and respond effectively to key counter-arguments.
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation are very good. Errors are few, if any.

Level 3: 11–15 marks

- Candidates produce effective and persuasive reasoning. Reasons and intermediate conclusions mostly support conclusion well with occasional irrelevance or reliance on dubious assumptions. Arguments may be simple, clear and precise, or demonstrate increased complexity with some blips.
- Language clear and developing complexity.
- Candidates may anticipate and respond to counter-argument.
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation are good. Errors are few.

Level 2: 6–10 marks

- Ability to produce basic reasoning with reasons which give some support to a conclusion but may rely on a number of dubious assumptions. Clear, straightforward, perhaps simplistic. Occasionally disjointed. Candidates may include a counter-argument or counter-reason, but respond to it ineffectively if at all.
- Language generally simple though clear.
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation are adequate. Errors are sometimes intrusive.

Level 1: 1–5 marks

- Limited ability to reason. Disjointed, incoherent. Reasons often do not support conclusion. There may not even be a stated conclusion.
- Language vague.
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation may be poor.
- Errors are intrusive.

Further OCR guidance is that ‘candidates will not have time to produce thorough arguments covering all possible strands of reasoning and responding to all counter-arguments. We should reward candidates who have demonstrated the ability to argue cogently, coherently and concisely. We are looking for an intelligent, thoughtful, structured response.’ A well-structured argument of about 300 words should be sufficient.

Suggestions of material for possible strands of reasoning are as follows:

Scene setting

Explanation of what welfare benefits are.

Reasons in favour of benefits

- We are a humane society and without benefits some people would be destitute, for example those unable to work because of disability or old age.
- Support by reference to deontological or human rights approach by which people are entitled to basic needs.
- Welfare benefits reduce the gap between rich and poor, an egalitarian principle.
- Without family benefits, many more children would experience poverty and ill-health and they are the country's future.
- Without unemployment benefit, many more people would be tempted to commit crime.
- Without benefits such as NHS many more people would be unfit for work, affecting the economy.

Counter-argument

The availability of unemployment benefit may tempt some people not to seek work and family benefits may encourage some women to have more children than they can bring up effectively.

Response

These are the exceptions. No system is perfect, but it is better to cater for the needs of the majority, such as hard-working people in retirement, than to abandon a system because a few people exploit it.

Section 5: Practice examination paper

- 1 Allow 2 marks each for a correctly identified component and explanation, or only 1 mark for a less thorough or partially correct answer.
 - a This is scene setting. It provides the background explaining why the issue of freedom of speech by fascists is being discussed. (2 marks)
 - b This is the first expression of a recurring counter-argument, working against the main conclusion that fascists should not be given a platform. (2 marks)
 - c This is an example or evidence, supporting the claim made in the previous sentence: 'This debate over whether fascists should be entitled to "freedom of speech" is by no means new.' (2 marks)
 - d This is an intermediate conclusion, supported by reason in the previous sentence. (2 marks)
 - e This is analogy. It likens modern-day fascists to those in history, acting as a reason to give further support to the main conclusion. (2 marks)

- 2** This should be marked according to the OCR level descriptors for analysis given for Exercise 2 question 8 (see page 6), awarding marks as follows: Level 4, 8–10 marks; Level 3, 6–7 marks; Level 2, 3–5 marks; Level 1, 1–2 marks.

Suggested answers are as follows:

Griffin promises an ‘all-white’ Britain, just as Hitler once promised a ‘Jew-free’ Germany: Reason and analogy. (R1)

And Griffin’s politics will follow the same genocidal logic if they are ever given the chance: Hypothetical reasoning. (R2)

That is why it is pointless to grant the fascists a platform in order to ‘defeat them in debate’: Intermediate conclusion (IC1) supported by the two preceding joint reasons.

Such set-piece events do nothing to stop the fascists outside the formalities of the debating chamber (R3). They do not deter the fascists from organising (R4): These rather similar reasons further support the intermediate conclusion that immediately precedes them. They act as a response to the implied counter-argument that a defeat on the platform is a total defeat.

On the contrary, fascists crave the respectability and legitimacy that such ‘debates’ inevitably confer upon them (R5): Reason repeated from paragraph 8. It can be interpreted as an additional reason supporting the intermediate conclusion ‘That is why it is pointless to grant the fascists a platform in order to “defeat them in debate”’ (IC1). Alternatively it can be viewed as acting as a reason for a slightly different intermediate conclusion which is assumed. If stated, it would read ‘so to grant the fascists a platform would actually strengthen them’.

Paragraph 23 acts as a new strand.

What does defeat the fascists — and what they are most scared of — is mass grassroots opposition to their presence: Reason. (R6)

That is how the Anti Nazi League defeated the National Front in the 1970s: Analogy acting as evidence for the preceding reason. (Ev)

...and it is how we can defeat the BNP today: Intermediate conclusion. (IC2)

Democracy relies on the minds and bodies of ordinary people: General principle acting as a reason. (R7)

...and it is this force that offers the means to fight fascism’s threat to democracy: Main conclusion. (MC)

- 3** Mark this using the OCR level descriptors given for Exercise 4 question 6 (see page 10). A suggestion for a very thorough Level 3 answer is supplied for guidance, but it is unlikely that many students would be able to write as much as this in the time limit.

Model answer:

Bhattacharyya effectively challenges the liberal view by countering it with the socialist one. While liberals argue that fascists’ ideas can be shown to be wrong through ‘debate, just like any other opinion or political current’, socialists reject the analogy by arguing that fascists are not

like other political movements in that they are not prepared to pursue power democratically. Bhattacharyya provides an alternative analogy; as fascists use physical tactics of thuggery they should be opposed by the physical tactic of group opposition and not being given space on a platform. He adds another astute point, that even if defeated in debate they will gain respectability and hence credibility by being seen on a platform.

He then moves to offering supporting evidence for his argument by well-known precedent as ‘the socialist argument is based on historical experience’. He relates how Mussolini gained power because liberals at the time ‘insisted that the fascists had to be treated like any other party and granted the same constitutional rights’. This powerful analogy with the current situation is underlined by use of similar vocabulary and by the observation that Italian fascists gained power by ‘a two-pronged attack — pretending to be committed to democratic norms while organising terror on the ground...the characteristic defining feature of fascism ever since’. This anticipates any counter-argument by liberals that current fascists such as the BNP are more interested in democracy and thus pose less of a threat.

Bhattacharyya’s position is reinforced by a second historical analogy, this time with Hitler, an example which constitutes an effective appeal to fear. The point is reinforced by the comment, especially aimed at liberals, that ‘Hitler threw into the concentration camps those very same people who had defended his rights to “free speech”.’

He makes the analogy explicit by the claim that ‘the BNP today stand in the same political tradition as Hitler and Mussolini’, though the evidence he provides here is impressionistic. He uses further appeals to fear such as ‘instituting a racial reign of terror’ and ‘frequently murderous consequences’, and though most people would accept this description, hard evidence such as actual figures for racial attacks by BNP members would strengthen the argument and reinforce the analogy with Hitler’s death camps.

In the next strand of the argument Bhattacharyya moves to an analogy between French and British students’ responses to allowing fascists to express their views and implies a cause and effect link between their being given a platform and gaining votes. This is a useful recent example because readers are likely to be aware of the alarm in France at Le Pen’s unexpected popularity. Bhattacharyya does not provide evidence that gaining the support of students leads to popularity amongst ordinary voters, a minor flaw in the reasoning, but if this is assumed, the conclusion logically follows that if we wish to avoid similar gains by British fascists, we should not give them a platform.

- 4** Apply evaluation criteria for comparing arguments as given for Exercise 5 (see page 12), awarding marks as follows: Level 3, 7–10 marks; Level 2, 4–6 marks; Level 1, 1–3 marks. A thorough sample answer is supplied below, though students are unlikely to manage as many points.

Model answer:

At the beginning of her discussion of the Oxford Union debate, Freedom Fighter makes what initially appears to be a reasonable point in suggesting that the BNP and Irving might lose some

credibility with the immediate audience if suitable articulate opponents spoke against them. However it is unlikely that many students who invited them would have been sympathetic to their arguments anyway, as they were presumably invited as examples of ‘extremists’. If those opposing them were less experienced public speakers, as is highly likely, a few listeners might even have been persuaded to take their ideas more seriously. Thus there is little to be gained by such an invitation and much to be lost. Bhattacharyya argues that fascists gain reputation by being invited to such a gathering, creating the false impression that they are interested in rational debate and free speech. Freedom Fighter does nothing to answer this point, instead resorting to the *ad hominem* (or straw person) tactic of mocking socialists as ‘bearded and sandaled Marxist idealists’.

In her second and third paragraphs Freedom Fighter continues with the possibly unjustified assumption that students have the life experience and wisdom to recognise the fascists’ message ‘for what it is and devise counter-arguments’. This ignores the warnings in Bhattacharyya’s article that experienced statesmen in the past failed to combat the Fascist movements in Italy and Germany by trying to treat them like other democratic parties. He says that ‘one cannot rationally “debate” with those who systematically lie about their real aims and views’. Freedom Fighter suggests that one can, without offering convincing evidence.

Furthermore she makes the optimistic assumption that ordinary members of the public will take notice of the intellectual arguments of former students, ignoring the well-known fact that fascist groups gain votes by playing upon people’s fears and ingrained prejudices. Her sweeping generalisation that ‘Truth is always recognised in the end’ is mere rhetoric and of little comfort if we consider the human cost of fascist regimes *until* truth is recognised, such as the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust. Freedom Fighter writes with naive idealism, ignoring the potential gravity of the BNP and Holocaust deniers despite the powerful analogies made by Bhattacharyya. Though the author’s attempt to widen the debate may be admirable, her move to link the desirability of free speech in personal conversation and humour with the need for open political debate is ill-judged because the situations are so different and her examples are far more controversial than she acknowledges. If she wishes to combat racism by revealing the flaws in BNP arguments, it is inconsistent to suggest that immigrants to Britain have to be prepared to accept racist language. There are laws against this. Suggesting they combat this by insulting people back is hardly mature.

The example of the Danish cartoons is also an ill-judged one to support her argument. Though the Danish prime minister’s comment appears to support her free speech stance, it is contradicted by the preceding facts. Rasmussen is quoted as saying ‘except for a few countries, we have seen almost exclusively positive reactions’, an excessively optimistic gloss on the protests by thousands, loss of life and massive boycott. Neither Rasmussen nor Freedom Fighter seems to be aware of the implications for whole nations when freedom of speech is exercised without discretion.

The Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand case is a very different issue from the Danish cartoons, on such a small scale in comparison that it is inappropriate to cite it in the same strand of

argument. It concerns the feelings and reputations of one or two individuals and is a matter of personal privacy, public taste and decency, quite a different issue from fascism, racism and jokes about the religion of millions. Too many issues are conflated in this article as examples of freedom of speech.

Freedom Fighter's lack of insight and fundamental seriousness, despite her attempt to engage with such a serious issue as freedom of speech, is underlined by her bland remark that offended listeners can simply turn off material they object to. Taken to its logical conclusion, this could potentially open the floodgates to obscenity and socially divisive broadcasts of the most virulent kind. But Freedom Fighter is not a logical thinker. She excuses freedom of speech by the old truism 'words will never hurt me', a position totally inconsistent with her earlier observation that 'Words are our most powerful weapons.'

To conclude, this blog is a far less persuasive argument than Bhattacharyya's article, taking no account of the historical precedents he cites and therefore failing to offer a convincing alternative to the socialist position. In her later argument the examples she offers of freedom of speech are too poorly chosen to convince and her closing comments about the lack of power of words are inconsistent with her earlier position.

- 5** Mark the essay out of 20 using the OCR descriptors for A2 argument writing, given for Exercise 9 (see page 17).

Candidates should make it clear from their title whether they have chosen to support or challenge the claim. Points and examples used in the argument should not be the same as in either of the documents.

If you are allowing students to research their essays, there is excellent analysis of the concept of freedom of speech in the Wikipedia entry http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech. Candidates could support freedom of speech by referring to Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights or much earlier sources such as Milton and John Stuart Mill. Freedom of speech has its downside of course, as we have to tolerate the expression of views we dislike and the possible effects on the audience: 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.'

A counter-argument is that few if any societies allow complete freedom of speech and expression, as it could conflict with other values such as cohesion (if hate speech is allowed), decency and the law (if there is no censorship of pornography, such as sexual abuse of children on the internet), national security (if those working in defence say all they know) and respect for faiths (if blasphemy is tolerated). Examples of all these could be cited.

Another possible angle on the essay could be to suggest that freedom of speech is a valuable right of liberty but not 'the most valuable', arguing that some other right, such as freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, is the most valuable.

© Philip Allan Updates 2009

ISBN 978-1-4441-0433-2

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of Philip Allan Updates or a licence permitting restricted copying in the United Kingdom issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London, EC1N 8TS.

Hachette UK's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

