

POLITICAL THOUGHT

Overall grade boundaries

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 28	29 - 43	44 - 56	57 - 69	70 - 82	83 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25	26 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There are three main points for consideration in relation to the range and suitability of the work submitted.

- It was suggested last year that care be taken in the future to ensure that the topics selected lend themselves to extended thinker-based analysis. In this respect the selection was much improved this year - interesting, wide-ranging and relevant case-study material well-presented and appropriately analysed. It is important that candidates continue to select appropriate topics which can act as robust vehicles for analysis.
- As always, the best work was usually the least descriptive. Candidates should be encouraged to try to summarise their case-study material briskly and effectively and then to apply ideas and to develop their analysis. Obviously, description and analysis cannot be separated neatly in this way but essays which are still describing in the final paragraphs are unlikely to be very successful.
- An allied but distinct point in relation to analysis: the point and purpose of the internal assessment task is the application of ideas to the chosen case-study material. Several IAs with (and this is perhaps significant) rather esoteric and complex case-study material tended to slip away into exegesis rather than analysis. Interesting though this might be it is not what the internal assessment is about.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Candidates generally performed well against each criterion and the overall standard was high. As always there was clear evidence of effective supervision and guidance and the material was marked sensitively and appropriately. The moderator had little disagreement with the marks awarded.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

See comments under *The range and suitability of the work submitted* concerning the importance of selecting appropriate case-study material and the priority to be given to analysis in terms of organisation and content.

Further comments

Overall, the work submitted was well-presented and thoughtfully developed. Students and teachers are to be congratulated on the standard achieved in respect of the IA.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates

Although standards varied, candidates had little difficulty in recognising and responding to the issues raised by the Mill, Burke and Berkman extracts. However, the question on Marx did cause difficulties. There was a certain degree of anticipation regarding the Marx topic - interestingly a number of students thought that it was the turn of 'alienation' and several attempted to interpret the question in these terms. More importantly however, it was clear that a number of candidates although familiar with the outlines of dialectical materialism (stages of history, the forces of production giving rise to the relations of production and so on) were less comfortable with the ideas contained in the extract - the final act in the drama; gigantic forces seemingly conjured from the 'nether regions'; crises of production driving history to its final revolution and resolution. The question required an insight into these topics so a general account of dialectical materialism (accurate though it usually was) was not usually sufficient.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Although standards of course varied, candidates generally demonstrated a clear grasp of the core elements of Mill, Burke and anarchist thought. The comparison of Burke's and

Berkman's attitudes towards authority was particularly well done in a substantial number of case. As last year, Q3 ('Compare and contrast extracts C and D...') was a good discriminator of overall performance precisely because of the need to develop a sustained comparative analysis.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

See previous comments in this section on a widespread weakness in relation to the Marx question. There were no discernible weaknesses in relation to Mill, Marx and anarchist thought. Although the level of detail and analytical insight varied, candidates were clearly familiar with the central issues raised by these thinkers and were able to respond to the extracts accordingly.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

See previous comments regarding the need to ensure that the teaching of Marx covers not only the central tenets of dialectical materialism but also a full understanding of the nature of the crises of production in a capitalist society in the final throes of dissolution - the rising up of giant forces that will ultimately destroy it. Interestingly, even the better candidates tended to use terms like 'forces of production' and the 'relations of production' without ever really making clear what they understood by these concepts or how they were related. A little more explanation when introducing key concepts would be welcome.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 13	14 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 40

The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates

Section A focused on the issue of representation. Most candidates were able to offer good material on types of representation but many found it difficult to engage with the question which asked about the extent to which representatives should mirror the social composition of the electorate. The two extracts provided arguments for and against this proposition and a substantial number of candidates précised these extracts and added a conclusion usually to the effect "yes, it's a good idea but we shouldn't push it too far". In most cases these were perfectly acceptable answers resting on some evident knowledge and understanding but they lacked a sense of debate and real engagement with the issues raised. It's always interesting to find answers which throw exam caution to the winds and come down firmly on one side of

the argument or the other - often evidence of informed and engaged opinion. There were few if any of these types of answers.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The Section B questions on toleration, equality and rights were generally well prepared and candidates displayed good knowledge and understanding. However, two points here. Section B asks candidates to make reference "...to the ideas of political thinkers where appropriate". Such references were not always much in evidence. The question on toleration was best in this respect; those on equality and rights much less so. Secondly, there is the vexed question of contemporary examples. These are not explicitly required in the questions, and their absence is not penalised. However, it is recognised that good examples and illustrations are often very useful in developing a thoughtful and well-informed answer. This year, such examples and illustrations were not very common even in the toleration question, where there is so much obviously very relevant contemporary material. It would be useful if students could be encouraged to come to the exam with a suitable selection and mix of examples and illustrations (as well as the views of political thinkers). NB "Examples" are not "case studies", and in-depth knowledge of such is not required.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

There was the usual distribution of marks with regard to all questions. See comments above in relation to the Section A topic (representation) and the Section B questions (toleration, equality and rights).

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

See comments above.
