Teacher Guide Section 5

17 Belief systems

General

The chapters in Section 5 provide suggestions for individual research and group projects as well as a practice written examination.

Encourage students to use their responses to the activities in Skills Section 5 to help them to work independently on individual research and group projects.

Encourage students to refer to Skills Sections 3, 4 and 5 to remind themselves of the skills they need to apply and the processes they have learned for planning a line of inquiry and planning a project.

Always download and use the most recent mark scheme to help students to assess their practice written examinations.

Guidance to practice written examination

Skills not knowledge

Remember that the written examination is testing Global Perspectives skills, not knowledge of the topic content. To date the questions have always followed the pattern below.

Question 1: Identify and analyse issues, considering problems, solutions, causes, consequences, perspectives and opinions. This can include identifying reasons, specific bits of evidence, perspectives and so on, as well as making suggestions and giving explanations.

Question 2: Plan a line of inquiry. This is usually about identifying gaps in knowledge or things students need to know, and working out how to find this information. This can be by framing questions to particular people, designing a small survey or suggesting an experiment or research project. It often requires students to identify specific information that they need to know for a particular purpose, and explain how this information will help. This question could address the project planning process.

Question 3: Question information and reasoning. This section can include questions about the reliability of sources, about the difference between facts, opinions and value judgments and about the quality of reasoning.

Question 4: Develop a line of reasoning. There is usually one long question, which may be a standard essay-type question. Other kinds of question may appear, such as a debate in which students have to make a case for one proposal, one use of energy and so on. Students may use, develop or argue against material from the resource booklet. They may also use any knowledge they have or opinions and perspectives of their own. No specific knowledge is required.
Note that the questions more or less follow the Global Perspectives learning process of: collect; question; reflect and plan; present and act. The skill of reflecting is rarely tested specifically but students who reflect on the issues tend to develop better reasoning in question 4.

**Vocabulary and concepts**

No specific knowledge, vocabulary or concepts are required for the written paper. In fact, specific knowledge can lead a student to write down what they know rather than responding to the questions. However, students may be more within their comfort zones if some subject-specific vocabulary and concepts are familiar to them. For this reason, it may be useful to do skills development exercises from a variety of topics that haven’t otherwise been used in the course. Another possible activity would be to organise debates and discussions on topics that haven’t been formally studied, in order to familiarise students with key concepts and vocabulary. Students can evaluate each others’ reasoning (using red cards for a weakness, perhaps), and the activity leads nicely into development of written reasoning.

**Mark schemes**

Always download and use the most recent CIE Global Perspectives mark scheme to help prepare students for assessment. Most of the questions are marked by levels, so you can adapt the marking grids to the questions in this chapter. For instance, quite a number of question parts, especially in questions 1, 2 and 3 in 2012 were marked according to levels which can be summarised as:

Level 3: Strong and supported reasoning, directly relevant to the question.

Level 2: Some description generally relevant to the question.

Level 1: Simple description, general and not specific to the question.

This general guide can be adapted to each question. Students can use this to learn what counts as simple description, what counts as relevant to the question and so on. Even weaker students, given the tools to understand how their answers are marked, can often identify what they need to do to achieve the next level.

Question papers and mark schemes evolve over time, and it is in students’ interests to use the most recent versions. For instance, in June 2011, the top level of the mark scheme for question 4 looked like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Question answered precisely and logically, supported by some or all of the following characteristics:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13–15</td>
<td>● Logically linked, coherent structure to the reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Candidates have made effective use of relevant ideas in the resource booklet as reasons to support their view and/or added their own relevant ideas. These ideas may be completely new, or they may be expansion of or response to existing material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Relevant different point/s of view from candidate’s own ideas or selected from resource booklet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Thoughtful consideration of different point/s of view AND strong explanation of why disagreed which really answers the different point of view OR possibly a suggestion of a compromise position between different points of view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, in November 2012 (the most recent mark scheme available at the time of writing) the top level of the mark scheme for question 4 looked like this:

| Level 5 | 16–18 marks | Very good, well supported and logical reasoning and judgments about the effects of the internet. Coherent, structured argument and evaluation of a range of internet effects on thinking – usually 4 or more. The response is likely to contain a range of clearly reasoned arguments and/or evidence to support the views expressed, with at least 4 developed points, and some undeveloped points. The response is balanced. A clear, balanced assessment or conclusion is reached. |

Note that there is now a quantitative element: “usually 4 or more”. This works down through the levels. Note also that the specific detail on how students deal with different points of view has been replaced with “the response is balanced”.

Look out for further developments, and make sure that your students are as prepared as possible.

**Indicative content**

This section provides indicative content for the practice paper. Accept other reasonable responses (and allow students to discuss what a reasonable response might be and why). Accept a variety of levels of sophistication, and encourage students to find the level on the most recent mark scheme that matches their performance.

Question 1

(a) Religious belief or faith; trust; belief regarding facts and truth; hope for the future; everyday beliefs (for example, cleaning teeth).

(b) Intellectual integrity (or honesty) is linked to beliefs based on things you can observe (often linked to the scientific method). “Just belief” refers to faith – this could be faith in God, faith in oneself, trust in another person, when there is no evidence to support the belief. Some aspects of life (often religion) require belief without evidence, and people who believe both in God and that in the need for proof can feel very conflicted.

(c) The study shows that people’s beliefs about the drink (based on information given but not on real differences in the drink) had a real effect on their test scores. People who believed the drink made a significant difference to mental performance scored significantly higher than the control group on the test, as did people who believed the drink was bought at full price. On the other hand, people who believed that the drink provided only a slight improvement tended to perform less well than the control group, and believing that the drink was bought at a discount made their scores even worse.

(d) Belief is a personal issue, especially when it comes to religion, but it matters on a national level. For instance, if people really believed that they should live a healthy lifestyle (rather than believing that burgers and a film are better for them than salad and some exercise), the health of the nation would be better, and this would contribute to economic
productivity. People who believe that others who have different beliefs are weird, wrong, dirty or shouldn’t be here can contribute to violence and national problems. This is even more significant globally when nations go to war over their different beliefs.

Question 2

(a) I would need to know how a group who had not had the energy drink compared with a group who had had the drink (being very careful what I told them!). Then I would need to repeat the test to see if the results were the same every time. If the people who had had the drink showed a higher performance, then I would know that the drink had a real effect, assuming that I had controlled for people’s beliefs. If the people who had not had the drink performed just as well, then I would think that the effects of the energy drink were all psychological.

(b) You would need to know whether the mother had regularly left her tiny children alone and for how long – leaving five year old children once for two minutes is very different from regularly leaving babies for two hours, for example, and taking children from a mother for a minor slip might do more harm. You would also need to know what other sort of mothering behaviour the woman had shown. If she was generally neglectful, struggling with addiction, or even abusive, then Suki has probably helped the children by removing them from a painful situation. But if her other mothering behaviour was loving and kind, then the children might suffer harm through being taken away from her. Evidence about what happens to the children afterwards would also help to know whether more harm or help was done – did the children find a loving home? Did they complete their education? Did they grow up to get jobs and become loving parents? If they did, then they were not harmed. On the other hand, if they did not, no one will ever know what caused their problems – a struggling mother, being taken from her or some completely different cause.

Question 3

(a) This cannot be checked or verified, and you can argue against it, for instance, by saying that our behaviour might depend on instinct or reason or on the law rather than on beliefs. Therefore it is an opinion.

(b) This is a value judgment, which is a kind of opinion. It cannot be checked or verified, and it deals with morals and what should be, so it’s about values.

(c) Cleaning our teeth seems like a good example of a personal, non-threatening behaviour affected by beliefs. But you could argue that we clean our teeth because our parents told us to, or because they feel better if they are clean, and you could show that some people don’t clean their teeth even though they believe it would keep them healthy. So this might not be as good an example as it seems.

(d) @deepthinker is reasonable, because it is true that beliefs don’t harm anyone if you keep them to yourself. On the other hand, some people are offended by other people having different beliefs – is this harmful? And who is doing the harming? It might be true that beliefs lead to actions but they don’t always lead to the same actions. Two people might believe
that immigrants are bad, but one might stay quiet on the subject and the other might preach hatred. So I think it is reasonable for @deepthinker to distinguish between beliefs and actions.

(e) The reasoning shown by @thatsallthereis is terrible. It attacks the arguer instead of the argument by saying “you’re all wishy-washy liberals who should just keep quiet”. It restricts the options by saying “either we tolerate all beliefs or we tolerate none” – this doesn’t even make sense, as we quite clearly do tolerate our own beliefs, even if we don’t tolerate others. The next part of the argument is a slippery slope, showing reasoning with extreme, unconnected consequences and a contradiction of the first part of the reasoning.

Question 4

Some ideas that students might include in their reasoning include the following.

● Personal beliefs, such as cleaning teeth are generally tolerated. But what about our intolerance for people who have different lifestyles: people who believe it’s acceptable to have two swimming pools in the desert; people who believe it’s acceptable to become seriously overweight and do on?

● Toleration of others’ beliefs so long as there is no harm. Discuss harm, moving on from @Suki’s points.

● Issues relating to beliefs about freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of religious belief, the right to one’s own opinion, and contrast with abuses of these freedoms.

● Issues relating to integration and matching the beliefs of those around you.

● When discussing this with students, encourage them to think about specifics, to be thoughtful, and to avoid general statements like “we should tolerate everything” and “we shouldn’t accept any difference from ourselves”.
