

The Cambridge Inspector's Report 2018



The role of the Cambridge Inspector

The Cambridge Inspector's primary functions are to:

- Ensure the **validity** of the assessment
- Ensure the **reliability** of the assessment

What I hope to cover this morning

- The Written Paper
- The Orals
- Some general points related to the assessment
- Hints and tips on helping you to improve your student's performance in the future

And, that is what I've just done!

In the orals, the best students start by;

- Defining the nature of the topic
- Outlining the proposed structure of the presentation

When students do this it impresses the examiners right at the start.

The Written Paper June 2018

The Written Paper June 2018

I want to start by quoting from one of my marker's reports. (Yes, I do read them).

“I was surprised by the high proportion of students who chose Sujet A, which seemed to contain the most feared questions, but the majority of them proved successful.”

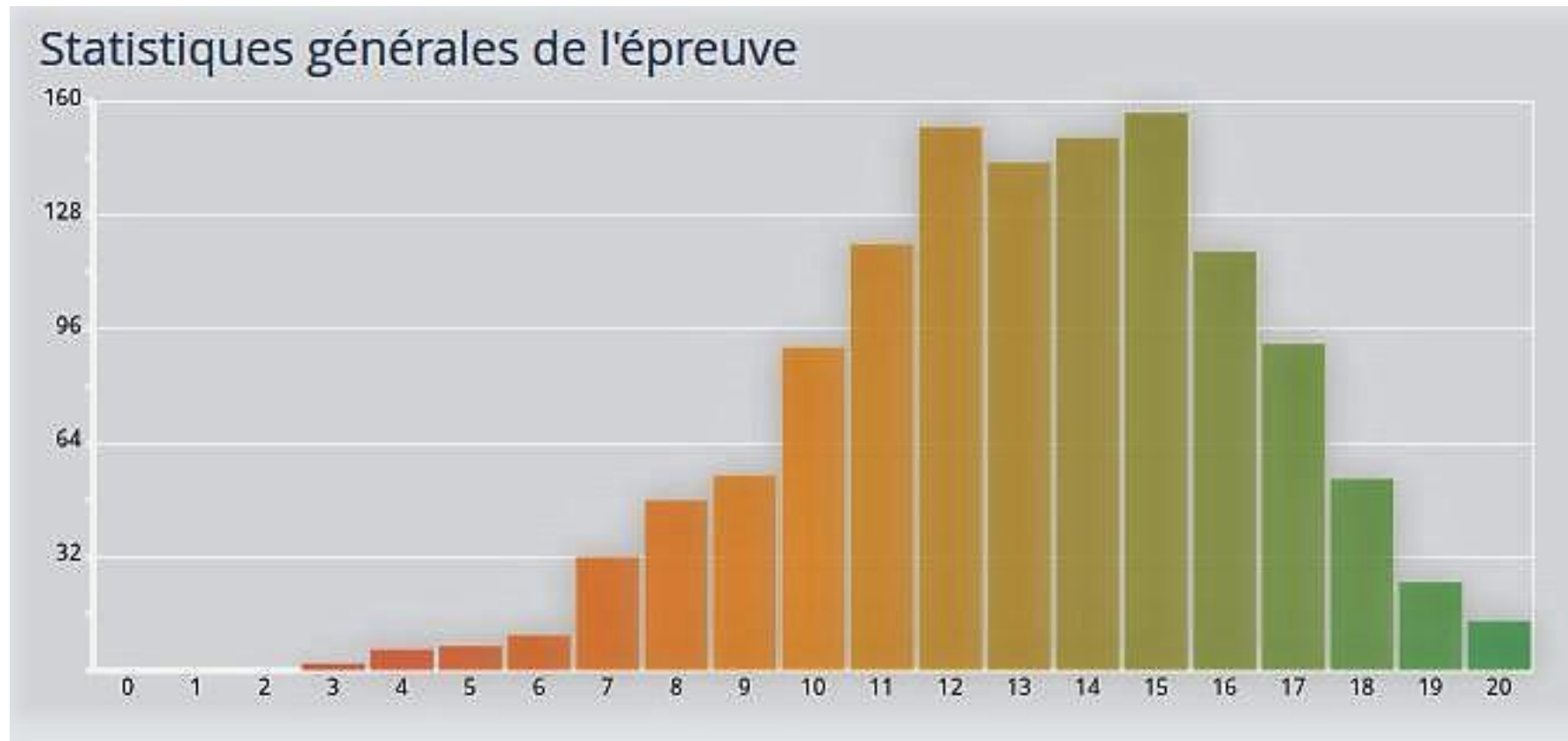
The Written Paper June 2018

The statistics from this June's exam are as follows;

Statistic	2017	2018
No of Candidates	1287	1380
Mean mark	13.17	13.15
Range of marks	2-20	3-20
No of full mark scripts	25 (1.94%)	14 (1.01%)
'Pass' percentage	87.5%	91.4%
Under 10/20	12.5%	8.6%

The Written Paper June 2018

The Graph taken from *Viatique*;



The Written Paper June 2018

The performance of each question – based on a representative sample;

Question	Percentage uptake	Mean mark
History Essay 1 (Media)	21%	14.3
History Essay 2 (Middle East)	36%	14.0
Geog AMQ (Mumbai, Johannesburg and megacities)	57%	13.3
Geog Essay 1 (Migration)	18%	11.9
Geog Essay 2 (Globalisation)	25%	13.8
History DBQ (European Integration)	43%	12.7

Setting the Written Paper

Setting the Written Paper

I am responsible for the validity of the written papers (there are eight set each year) but I have minimal control over the questions, and only limited control over the way that they combine in each paper.

Why is this?

Setting the Written Paper

- You, the teachers set the questions
- They are submitted to Mr. Delmas who vets them; *‘Oui’ or ‘Non’ or ‘Oui, mais...’*
- I receive them from Mr. Delmas and use them to construct the various papers
- They then go to the Assistant Cambridge Inspector for her comments

Setting the Written Paper

- Then we have a QPEC meeting in Cambridge to discuss the nature of the papers, not really the nature of the questions. Several changes are made at this point.
- The Papers go back to Mr. Delmas
- I have a meeting with Mr. Delmas where we make further changes – mostly to ensure there is no overlap with the papers of the two previous years.

Setting the Written Paper

- The papers are then finalised and set up by the French Authorities in the SIEC *Maison des Examens*.
- I write an *indicative content* mark scheme for the Geography questions
- The Assistant Cambridge Inspector writes the *indicative content* mark scheme for the History questions

Setting the Written Paper

- The mark scheme is then finalised in discussion with key members of the community between the date of the exam and the start of marking – a very brief period indeed
- The point here is to emphasise that I am not in a position to make any promises about next year's paper

Setting the Written Paper

- All topics from the syllabus can appear on any of the eight papers, and in any combination
- However, the recent syllabus re-write has made it much clearer for me to interpret the syllabus – and...
- I am now more aware of which of the History topics are given the most teaching time

Marking the Written Paper

Marking the Written Paper

- Despite problems with scanning, allocation of scripts, and the new style of Geog AMQ, marking went well this year
- Four exemplar marked scripts were provided at the start of marking to help to *standardise* the marking
- Markers applied the mark schemes consistently and very few scalings were required

Marking the Written Paper

- Estimated grades were useful but not always that accurate
- Marking was completed by the deadline – an amazing feat considering the short time scale and the many problems encountered
- The markers deserve thanks and praise – well done!

Improving Your Students' Exam Performance

Improving Students' Exam Performance

- In the essay questions, students must treat each part of the essay as a separate question. Failure to do so makes it much more difficult for the markers to award good marks. **Markers report that this is a big problem**
- Leave a two line gap between each part of the essay or, even better, designate them as *part a)* and *part b)*
- Students must recognise that the command for the first part is *Explain* (a lower demand) while the command for the second part is *Evaluate* (a much higher level demand).

Improving Students' Exam Performance

Structure is important – as can be seen in the generic mark scheme

- Introductions are important but should be brief and to the point, possibly laying the foundation for the arguments that will follow in the body of the essay
- The conclusion should not *just* repeat statements that have already been made. It is an ideal place to emphasise the evaluative part of the answer, making an overall judgement on the issue under discussion

Improving Students' Exam Performance

- The conclusion is also a place where the 'big picture' approach can be demonstrated – but in the best answers the 'big picture' approach is shown in the main part of the essay, i.e. in the different paragraphs
- Quite clearly, planning an answer is important
- Finally, markers have pointed out that the structure required in an OIB answer is not necessarily the same as that required in a *Bac Generale* answer

Improving Students' Exam Performance

Another difference between the OIB and the *Bac Generale*, is the importance of command words. The command is clearly linked to the nature of the mark scheme and failure to respond to these commands can result in a very low mark because the student is ***not answering the question (NAQ)***.

Improving Students' Exam Performance

The commands that seem to cause the most problems are

- '*Evaluate...*' ,
- '*Assess the extent to which...*' ,
- '*How useful are...*'

These commands are asking for the higher level cognitive skills and failure to respond to them means that a student cannot be awarded the higher level marks.

Improving Students' Exam Performance

Evaluation can be achieved through such phrases as;

- 'The most important aspect is...'
- 'This can lead to X, which is one of the most important aspects of...'
- 'X is a bigger problem than Y because X operates for longer/at a larger scale'

Improving Students' Exam Performance

Using **examples** and **developing** points;

- Relevant **examples** always gain extra credit and extend the breadth of an answer
- Points can be **developed** by phrases such as 'This means that...'
- **Developing** points in this way adds to the depth of an answer

Improving Students' Exam Performance

- In the History DBQ, the phrase 'How useful...' in part a) of the question expects a discussion of the **usefulness** of the documents and a discussion of the **uselessness** of the documents.
- If students can successfully challenge a statement or an assumption, this shows higher level analysis

Improving Students' Exam Performance

In the DBQ (and in the second part of an AMQ), students often discuss some aspects of the question NOT covered by the documents. When they do this, phrases such as;

- 'One important point not covered by the documents is...'
- 'The documents make no mention of X but...'

Improving Students' Exam Performance

- The generic mark scheme is very helpful.
- You have all been given a copy and I want you to look at it now – especially the material on the back which compares *Cambridge Style* with what we do in the OIB.

Improving Students' Exam Performance

- Some time spent in class, discussing and practising exam technique strategies is highly recommended.
- Highlighting the key words and commands in a question can often focus a student's mind on a suitable answer.
- The advice **RTPA** – '*read the question, think about the question, plan your answer, before you answer the question*' is worth considering.

The Oral Examinations

The Oral Examinations

- There was no slack in the system this year, but despite illness and railway strikes, the 'well-oiled machine' operated well.
- This is due to the professionalism of all involved.
- Detailed contingency planning was in place but most of it was not required.

The Oral Examinations

- However, as Cambridge Inspector, I find the orals more difficult to check for reliability than the written exam, despite the sterling work of the Assistant Moderators
- This is partly due to the greater potential for ‘variability’ in the orals, making the schools estimated grades much less reliable

The Oral Examinations

The variables appear to be;

- The ability of the students (this is what we are trying to assess).
- How the syllabus content has been taught
- The nature of the preparation of the students by their teachers, in terms of oral exam technique

The Oral Examinations

- The students' selection of Key Issue and Key Term
- Topics in the Key Content are chosen to be comparable but each individual student may not regard the topics as comparable, depending on personal preference and the nature of their revision

The Oral Examinations

- The varying skills of the different examiner pairs
- The time of day of the oral exam itself – impacting on the student and on the examiners

The Oral Examinations

I'd like to briefly share some of these issues with you and how they might be addressed.

- Comparing marks awarded to a school's estimates is an essential exercise for the Cambridge Inspector when moderating the orals
- However, estimates are not always that reliable because of the variables that I have mentioned earlier

The Oral Examinations

This is what I like to see;

These are actual marks against estimates i.e. +3 means the actual mark was 3 marks **higher** than the school's estimate

+3	x
+2	x x x x x
+1	x x x
0	x x x x x x x
-1	x x x x x
-2	x
-3	x x
-4	x

The Oral Examinations

But it does not always happen;

	PAIR A	PAIR B	PAIR C
+7	x		
+6	x		
+5			
+4	xxx	x	x
+3	x	x	
+2	xxxxxx	xx	x
+1	xxxxx		xx
0	xxxxxxxx	xxx	x
-1	xxxxxxxxxx	xx	xx
-2	xxxxxx	x	xx
-3	xxx	xxx	x
-4	xx	xxx	x
-5	x		xx
-6	x		xx
-7			x

- All students are from the same school
- I inspected each examining pair
- The variability is considerable for all three pairs
- The school's estimates seem to have been a little generous
- Pair A and Pair B seem to have a comparable distribution but Pair A seem to have been more skilful at drawing out the best from the students
- Pair C appear to have been a little too harsh
- I decided to scale Pair C's marks at the bottom end

Improving Your Students' Performance in The Oral Examinations

Improving Students' Oral Exam Marks

- Attend one of the oral training meetings (even if you are not an oral examiner)
- Study the orals **mark scheme** to see what is required of the students in the oral examination
 1. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding
 2. AO2a – Skills of analysis and evaluation
 3. AO2b – Skills of organisation and communication

Improving Students' Oral Exam Marks

Teach and practise oral exam skills, e.g.

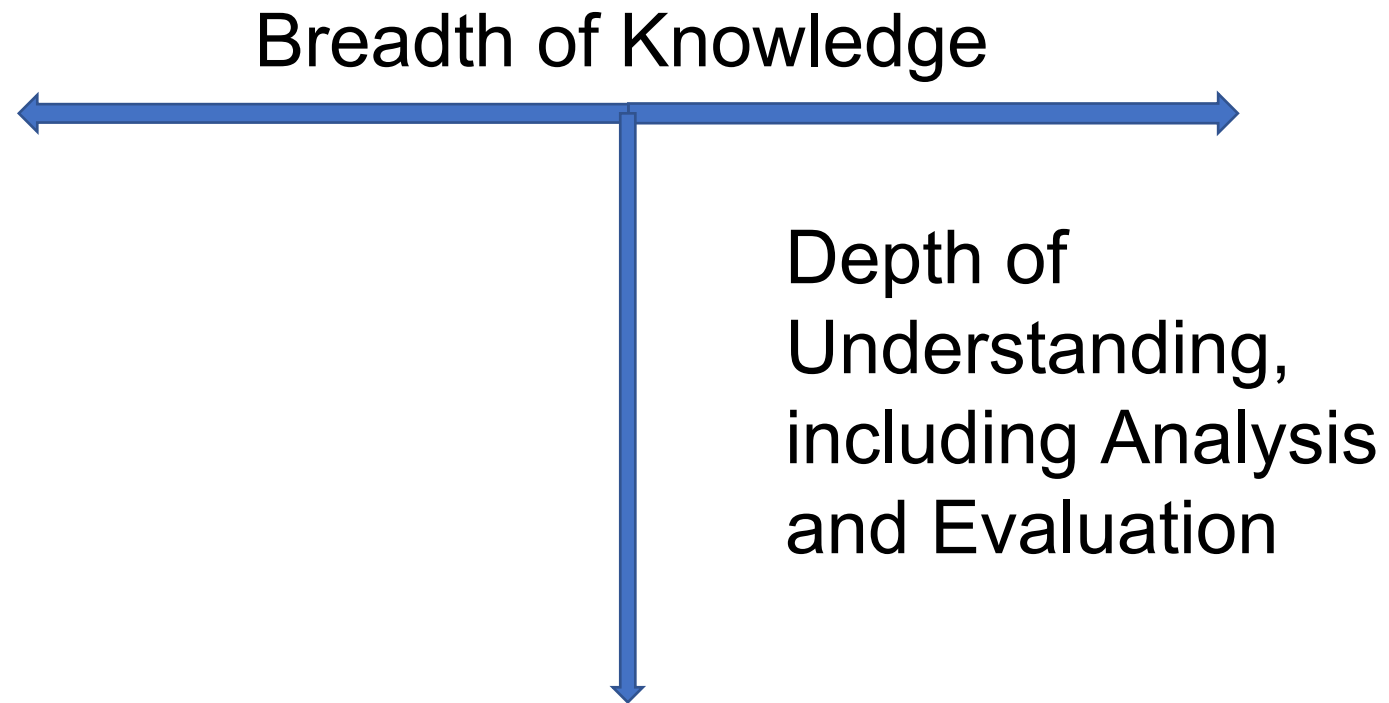
- The best use of the 20 minutes preparation time
- The importance of a good introduction
- Use all five minutes for the presentation
- Use the time effectively – don't run out of time
- Keep an eye on the time and hammer home a conclusion

Improving Students' Oral Exam Marks

- Balance breadth (Kn) with depth (Un, An, Ev)
- Think before you answer the examiners' questions
- Be positive, confident and show self-belief
- Challenge the assumptions put forward by the examiners

Improving Students' Oral Exam Marks

Breadth and Depth are both important;



Improving Students' Oral Exam Marks

- Getting the balance right between breadth and depth is important
- For example, if you choose 'The 14 Points' as a topic for your presentation, do you try to cover all 14 points (breadth) or do you focus on 4 or 5 in much more detail (depth)

Improving Students' Oral Exam Marks

And finally, a word to the examiners...

1. Assess the student's ability early on and focus your questioning to bring out best responses that the student is capable of.
2. Be positive not negative in your marking. Focus on what the student did, not on what they didn't do. How much could **you** do in five minutes?

Some General Points in Conclusion

Some General Points

- All topics from the syllabus can appear on the written paper, and in any combination
- The Geog AMQ is now an option and there will be no pattern in terms of when it is used
- So I need plenty of AMQ questions **and** Geog DBQ questions
- Avoid repetition of questions that have appeared in the last two years – but repeating the topic is OK

Some General Points

- It is really important that the students write their Cambridge number on each page of their answer booklet – and don't put post-it notes on top of it to cover it up – this defeats the object
- If there is a Geog AMQ, students must write their name and Cambridge number on both sides of the 'tear-out' sheets and ensure that these sheets are added to their answer booklet

Some General Points

- Perhaps the format of any Geog AMQ could be improved e.g. 150 words for the commentary rather than 15 lines
- Can we try to make the estimated grades more reliable? However, I appreciate that this is a difficult task, especially for the oral exam.

Some General Points

The oral is a really valuable assessment vehicle, assessing competencies that cannot be assessed on the written paper. However, it is a high-risk situation for the student and it is so easy to lose a lot of marks very quickly. I'm aware of good students mis-interpreting the 'regional inequalities' Key issue in 2018 and 'bombing out' as a result.

Some General Points

- When preparing students for the exam, mark schemes are more important than past paper questions
- The generic mark scheme is much more useful than the '*indicative content*' because it shows the type of answer that will gain high marks

Some General Points

- I know how tight the allocation of teaching time is but try and put some time aside to teach examination technique as well as the syllabus content.

Thank You for Listening

Do You Have Any
Questions?