

**GP Preliminary Examinations 2012**  
**Paper 1 Answer Guide**

**1. Is modern society giving enough attention to its weakest members?**

Candidates should assess if modern society is providing adequate attention for the needs of their weakest members. The definition of modern society should include stakeholders besides the government such as NGOs, individuals and private companies. Attention given can be in the form of financial assistance, medical aid, legislation protecting the rights of certain groups, etc. There should be a careful attempt to define 'weakest members' which could include the elderly, the infirm, the handicapped, the underprivileged, children, and people being discriminated for various reasons such as gender, sexual orientation or race. There should be a clear attempt to weigh what is considered as "enough" and characteristics of modern society should feature in the discussion.

Better essays will explore a wider range of issues related to the question and acknowledge that it may not be practical to really extend an inexhaustible supply of help to the weak groups given entrenched inequalities and other realities such as scarcity and the global capitalist system which thrives on profit-accumulation and competition.

Weaker scripts would struggle with the definition of 'weakest members' and have limited scope. They will also not examine what is meant by "enough attention" and merely list various actions taken by society to help the less fortunate. Weaker scripts may also deviate from the key focus of the question by listing other groups of people that society is giving attention to.

**2. How far has sport been undermined by commercialisation ?**

Candidates should examine the extent to which the true purpose or value of sport has been weakened by the drive to make money. Professional sport is a big business that has grown rapidly over the last three decades. Athletes, support personnel (managers, coaches, officials, media persons, lawyers, and agents), and sports team owners benefit handsomely from the willingness of sports fans to pay to watch their favourite sports and to purchase the commodities endorsed by sport personalities. Hundreds of professional athletes earn well over \$1 million a year. Students must examine the extent to which such developments have destroyed the genuine value of sport and evaluate if athletes have become so obsessed with money that they forego principles of fair play and sportsmanship. Students should pay close attention to the specific principles of sport which have been compromised due to commercialisation.

Better essays would cite a wide range of real life examples in their discussion and even consider if sport can be boosted by commercialisation (E.g. greater visibility through television deals, proliferation of sporting events, etc.) They would probe deeper into the relationship between sport and commercialisation and acknowledge that it could be a marriage of convenience.

Weaker scripts would merely list various examples of the commercialisation of sport with little regard for the word 'undermined' or fail to examine the extent to which this is true.

### **3. 'It is now better to be a woman than a man.' To what extent is this true?**

Students should understand that this is a comparative question which necessitates systematic comparisons of the rights, privileges, opportunities and statuses of men and women. Students can take either position and say that it is true / not true. This should be discussed using examples from the modern world from various contexts such as politics, economics, family, media portrayals and lifestyle related issues. As long as students recognise that things may/ may not have changed, and draw some comparison to the past, it is acceptable. Students need not compare the recent developments in a point-by-point manner.

Better scripts will consider the issue using real life examples and cover a relatively broad range of issues (at least 3). They would also consider the question from the perspectives of both developed and developing countries and make close references to modern day trends which have implications on the power dynamics between man and woman (E.g. Birth control methods, rising education levels of women and various human rights movements petitioning for greater gender equality.)

Weaker essays will merely accept the claim without considering alternative views or discussing 'the extent' to which the claim is true. They may also make simplistic overgeneralisations and sweeping statements about men and women without proper factual backing and have little or no engagement with 'today's world'.

### **4. 'Advertising is as much a good thing as a bad thing.' Do you agree?**

Students should understand that the claim assumes that advertising is equally good and bad (a mixed blessing/double-edged sword). If they agree with the claim, their essay should clearly evaluate how advertisements have the same propensity to both harm and benefit society. To do this, they should examine the impact of different types of advertisements (E.g. advertisements promoting consumption Vs public service messages/government campaigns) across different media platforms such as the newspapers, magazines, television, billboards and even the internet. They could consider issues such as the perpetuation of stereotypes, materialism, corporate social responsibility and false advertising. Fundamentally, students need to address the intention of advertisements to be able to draw conclusions about the impact.

Better scripts will pay particular attention to evaluating the extent to which advertisements can be beneficial or damaging by considering a wide range of relevant examples which highlight the correlation between advertorial content and social behaviour on a range of stakeholders. Students should show cognisance of the fact that the impact of advertising is dependent on the nature of the society. (E.g.: Level of education of the people, govt regulations, etc.)

Weaker essays will cite random examples of social vices such as crime or materialistic values and simply blame it all on advertisements without providing ample evidence of this correlation. Poor answers may also simply conclude that advertisements are both harmful and beneficial without weighing the extent of harm/benefit which is an imperative requirement of the question.

## **5. 'Knowledge divides.' Is this true of the modern world?**

Students should consider the extent to which this claim is true by referring to the differential access to different types of knowledge such as the knowledge that is communicated through new information media, medical science, technological know-how and awareness of socio-political issues. Students should show clear understanding of the concept of 'knowledge divides' which refers to the gaps in standards of living and economic development that exist between those who can find, create, manage, process, and disseminate information or knowledge, and those who cannot. The divide created by knowledge need not be confined to economic inequalities. Students could also deal with the idea of 'ignorance is bliss' and discuss how a deepening awareness and understanding of issues may create greater conflict between groups of people.

Better scripts will show a good understanding of the rise in the 21st century of a global information society that has resulted in the emergence of knowledge as a valuable resource, increasingly determining who has access to power and profit (divisions need not be only economic in nature as there could be other types of conflict such as conflicting ideologies). They would make references to real life examples of the have and have-nots and demonstrate how inequalities are closely tied to access to knowledge. They would also recognise that knowledge does not always divide (E.g. A greater understanding between groups may reduce the conflict and knowledge can also empower people to free themselves from oppression).

Weaker scripts will demonstrate a very understanding of 'knowledge divides' and perhaps only discuss knowledge in terms of having an education.

## **6. Is education the only determinant of success?**

Candidates should evaluate if formal education is only method of attaining success (material and non-material). They should examine the value of an education system in preparing people for success as opposed to relying on other factors such as luck, talent, attitude, skills, etc. They can even question if there is just one best route to success or if the best-method is a combination of various factors which may include/exclude education.

Good scripts will make references to real life examples which would illustrate the extent to which education/other factors prepare people for success. They would take into account deeper issues such as the quality of the education system and examine the reasons why some individuals can succeed despite dropping out of top schools.

Weaker scripts will make simplistic assumptions that all education systems prepare people for employment. Instead of comparing the effectiveness of different routes to success, poor answers will merely list various possible methods of attaining success and comment that 'education is not the only method'.

## **7. Should a love of the arts even be encouraged in Singapore today?**

Students need to be sensitive to the words 'should' and 'encouraged', and also support their views with an appreciation of how the arts is being encouraged in Singapore. (E.g. Subsidies for students, building better facilities, inviting internationally acclaimed performances.) Students should discuss this in relation to the various art forms (e.g. music, theatre productions, painting sculptures etc). Students should show good engagement with the word 'even', and address the underlying assumption that a love of the arts is unimportant or less important.

Better essays would consider the issue in relation to why encouraging a love of the arts is important (eg holistic development of students, cultural development of the society, foster creativity, create a dynamic and vibrant society ) and contrast this with the arguments against encouraging a love of the arts. They may consider this in relation to the futility of the attempts at encouraging a love for the arts, or other pressing issues that warrant more attention than the arts (for example improvements to basic amenities and facilities, transportation, continued economic prosperity, employment issues etc.)

Weaker scripts may be limited in its scope, and focus on only one form of art. Such scripts may also describe the various ways in which a love of the arts is encouraged, without explaining why/how a love of the arts is / is not important to Singapore and its people.

## **8. How far has modern technology simplified the criminal's task?**

Students need to define 'the criminal's task' (E.g. committing the crime, escaping detection and arrest etc) before proceeding to explain how the task has been simplified by technology. Students must 'link' the discussion back to the perspective of the criminal's task.

Better essays would explicitly show how the task has been simplified (instead of simply glossing over the issue). Points for consideration include: the ease the distribution of counterfeit goods, co-ordinating efforts in organised crime and transnational crime and how technology can help criminals to conceal unauthorized transactions and avoid detection and arrest etc.). Students would have a balanced treatment of the issue and discuss how modern technology has provided police with crime-fighting technology (e.g. surveillance technology, wireless technology) and prevent crimes, thereby making the criminal's task more complicated. An evaluation of the extent of 'how far' modern technology has simplified the criminal's task can then be made effectively.

Weaker scripts may be limited in their scope, and focus on how modern technology 'has caused crime'. Such scripts may simply list the pros and cons of technology without actually evaluating 'how far technology' has simplified the criminals task.

## **9. Do ethics necessarily impede scientific progress?**

Students need to recognise that the question implies a tension/ conflict between ethics and scientific progress and it questions the assumed presence of this tension/ conflict. Students need to define 'ethics' , 'scientific progress' and show a clear understanding of the word 'impedes' by explaining how ethics delays and checks scientific advancements (in the form of new discoveries and inventions), developments and improvements. Students can take a liberal interpretation of scientific progress ranging from physical and life sciences to interdisciplinary and applied sciences such as medical sciences and engineering. (Definition of ethics: a set of moral principles/values AND/OR the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group.) Students must explain and evaluate the impact that ethics has on scientific progress by drawing a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the two. The student needs to deal with the word, "necessarily", and acknowledge/describe the assumed tension/ conflict that exists between ethics and scientific progress. This term also demands that students set up a balanced argument that examines both sides of the issue before weighing/ evaluating the extent of limitations that ethics impose on scientific progress. Students are expected to pay attention to the word 'necessarily' and discuss how ethics have created problems for scientific progress by imposing certain limitations in terms of the type of research allowed and how the research is carried out.

Better essays would explain why in spite of the limits imposed by ethics , these 'limits' are necessary in order for science to progress without harming people and society. (To achieve a higher level of scientific progress: one that develops without harming Mankind, and may even be beneficial to the human race.) Some may discuss how ethics may even drive scientific progress, especially in the field of medical science.

Weaker essays may merely describe the pros and cons of scientific progress and how ethics are necessary without drawing clear links to how ethics 'impede' scientific progress. The question also does not allow a discussion of other factors that may impede progress. Students must stay focused on the issue at hand (ethics) and evaluate the extent to which it influences/impacts scientific progress.

## **10. Can a sense of community ever coexist with individualism?**

Students must show a clear understanding of the 'individualism' and 'a sense of community'. 'Individualism' or egoism is the pursuit of individual interests rather than common or collective interests. Students should deal with the assumption that individualism and a sense of community cannot coexist and acknowledge that it will be difficult to disagree with the statement (which, in this case, means they cannot coexist.) Students should also recognise the tension between the two, as individual interests may be pursued at the expense of the community, thereby undermining the collective interests.

Better essays would recognise that even though such tensions exist, they may not compromise the sense of community and common values. Such students would recognise that individualism means a conscious or assumed philosophy that what drives us is most beneficial to us, forms what is most morally correct due to the supremacy of the rights of the individual. The individual's interests, values, and property are virtuous, as are everybody else's. If these are respected and allowed to proper, the outcome of their interactions will be to the benefit of all (E.g. Free market). Students should recognise that the community emphasises the interdependence of every human being, and the presence of collective interests. When individuals work together, they become

stronger and more resistant to misfortune. As such, the common good must take precedence over the individual's interests (as the rights of the majority trump that of the minority.) Students may also discuss how the community is enhanced by the skills and energy of the self-interested individual. (Eg: Entrepreneurs seek profits for themselves, but in doing so, help drive the economy.) A society that stifles ambition gets nowhere and ultimately invites the weakening of the community. The collective, however, needs to be alert to the destructive tendencies of uncontrolled individualism. Students can also consider how individual voices help to contribute or save the community.

Weaker essays may limit the scope of discussion may to just the physical community rather than the actual community (ie community spirit or sense of social obligations).

#### **11. 'It is impossible to preserve tradition in the modern world.' Discuss.**

Students need to clearly define 'tradition' as long-standing customs and practices which are passed down through the generations. These may be unique to a particular country, people, family, culture or institution. In addition, they need to consider characteristics of the modern world in evaluating why it is/is not possible to maintain traditions with modernisation, changing mindsets and lifestyles. Students may also discuss this issue in relation to globalisation and cultural erosion etc.

Better essays may consider how traditions are preserved and whether these traditions are preserved in an authentic manner. This may be discussed in view of cultural homogeneity. Students should provide a good range of examples that clearly illustrate how traditions have been/ have not been preserved.

Weaker essays: Students may simply describe how traditions are eroded without clearly showing how preserving traditions is impossible. Such scripts may also be limited in their scope.

#### **12. Assess the influence of the media on the political culture of your society.**

Students need to show a clear understanding of 'political culture' and clearly identify the influence of the media before proceeding to assess the influence of the media on the political culture of their society. Students should consider both the positive and negative influence of the media on political culture to achieve a balanced treatment of the issue.

Points for consideration include consideration of the impact on the media on different stakeholders (voters, young people, the government, etc.)

Better essays: Students should provide a good range of examples that clearly illustrate how much influence the media has on the political culture of the society. Such scripts should also consider the different types of media and political systems (students would show clear awareness of how the media functions in our political system of a controlled democracy).

Weaker essays: Students may mistake political culture (i.e. The attitude of the citizens of a nation towards politics, and the nature of the political processes involved) with politics. Such scripts may be limited in their scope, and focus on the influence of the media without clearly linking the impact on political culture.