Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 2

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for each element of this course assessment component.

Justifying an appropriate, complex, contemporary political/social issue (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **4 marks** for this element.

The hypothesis, 'Prison does not work', is from the approved list. The three aims are relevant and appropriate. The breadth of the dissertation's aims is ambitious in terms of coverage, especially across Chapters 2 and 3. The introduction covers the global context and importance of the issue and considers the aims of prison as a key element. The introduction is brief and introductions to each chapter add little context, beyond that touched on in the initial introduction section.

Evaluating research methodology (6 marks)

The candidate was awarded **3 marks** for this element.

The evaluation of research methods is on the short side at 267 words. Comments cover basic advantages and disadvantages of methods. Critical analysis and evaluation relevant to specific methodologies is needed. Potential changes which could be made to enhance the quality of the research findings are cursory and not fully developed. There is no mention of ethical issues. Although not mandatory, this would improve the overall response.

Using a wide range of sources of information (6 marks)

The candidate was awarded **4 marks** for this element.

A wide range of sources have been consulted and used, eg the Prison Reform Trust, academic journal, government reports as well as a survey with a reasonable sample size of 77 respondents. Due to the referencing style, it is difficult to ascertain accurately whether the sources are up-to-date, however, they seem fairly contemporary. The primary research conducted is arguably underused.

The evidence gathered is used to support the line of argument, but could go further by providing greater depth to support analysis and evaluation.

Analysing the issue (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **4 marks** for this element.

There is good use of evidence to offer strong support of the line of argument in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 is compartmentalised and list-like due to the effort to analyse five different alternatives to prison within 1000 words. Treatment is always going to lack depth with this approach. The bulleting of information in relation to 'community payback' is not best practice. Throughout chapters there is a descriptive treatment of the issues with analytical comments tagged on in places.

Evaluating arguments and evidence (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **3 marks** for this element.

This dissertation is imbalanced with very little exploration of the alternative view that 'prison does work'. Evaluation is very limited in Chapter 1 and 2. Chapter 3 is a largely descriptive comparison between the USA and Norway with coverage deviating onto the death penalty which is not convincingly linked to the candidate's line of argument.

Synthesising information to develop a sustained and coherent line of argument, leading to a conclusion supported by evidence (10 marks)

The candidate was awarded **4 marks** for this element.

Chapter 1's conclusion is questionable; there does not appear to be one. In Chapter 1 there is also an over reliance on long quotes that are under-explored. Chapter 2 is highly descriptive. The overall conclusion pulls the three chapters together and there is some evaluation in the overall conclusion which attempts to directly address the hypothesis. However, the final conclusion is unsophisticated and built on a flawed approach. The main body of this dissertation and the conclusion do not offer convincing evidence that the candidate has a firm understanding of the complex issues associated with prisons.

Organising, presenting and referencing findings using appropriate conventions (4 marks)

The candidate was awarded **3 marks** for this element.

Footnotes are used in a clear and consistent manner, though lacking precision and academic detail.

The bibliography does not follow appropriate academic conventions and is not creditworthy as a result. It would also benefit from being more structured and organised.

Survey questions and results are presented, with demographic information which is given credit.

Overall

This is a very short dissertation running to 4,173 words, well short of the maximum word count of 5000 (+ 10%) words. It is written in a very naïve style which is descriptive and list-like in parts. It lacks balance and depth and deviates from the question in parts, particularly Chapters 2 and 3. Ideally, the appendices could also be more detailed and better presented.

Overall, this dissertation was awarded **25 out of 50 marks.**