Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 3

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 **8 marks** for this element.

This dissertation has a strong hypothesis and clear aims which are clearly stated and set out in the introduction. The aims are clearly linked, but distinctive from one another and serve to allow the candidate to test their hypothesis.

There is also good use of evidence to clearly demonstrate the contemporary significance of the issue. The introduction sets out the wider context effectively and outlines what the dissertation will go on to explore. The coverage is highly contemporary. The end of the introduction gives a justification of the relevance of the issue to the wider world and penal policy.

Evaluating research methodology (6 marks)

The candidate was awarded **6 marks** for this element.

A solid review of the methodology is presented. The candidate refers to their secondary research and how this backed up their primary. Strengths and weaknesses of the methods are explored with specifics given, eg bias from interviews and information gleaned. Academic texts are mentioned with effective attempts made to explore potential changes to methods employed. Although worthy of full marks, this response could be improved. It could expand further on points regarding potential changes in approach, although potential changes to the questioning approach regarding Lord Clarke is creditworthy.

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

The candidate was awarded **6 marks** for this element.

A variety of quality sources are cited including the candidate's survey, academic sources (Journal of Psychology), pressure group information (Prison Reform Trust) and primary research. Sources are contemporary, the oldest referenced source being from 2011. Source evidence is used well and referenced accurately throughout the dissertation using academic conventions in footnotes by citing dates accessed and full details of the origin. Evidence and information from all appendices are utilised and footnoted in the main body of the dissertation.

Analysing the issue (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **8 marks** for this element.

Chapter 1 contains excellent analysis of how prisons fail to meet the needs of prisoners with mental health issues. There is clear explanation of programmes and the limits to their effectiveness, linking regularly to the question. Problems of prisons are clearly analysed. Excellent comparisons and evidence of approaches to mental health problems in prisons in the USA and Scandinavia are made in Chapter 3.

Evaluating arguments and evidence (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **8 marks** for this element.

Evidence is thoroughly evaluated throughout, with strong concluding remarks linked back to the candidate's aims. Chapter conclusions are balanced and insightful, critically appraising the information presented. Evaluation is integrated throughout the line of argument, with alternatives both discounted and accepted at various points. Both international comparator countries are evaluated. There is particularly good exploration of the USA rather than the sweeping generalisations that many candidates are prone to provide.

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

The candidate was awarded **10 marks** for this element.

There is a clear, structured line of argument throughout. Evidence is used effectively to support conclusions. The aims are revisited and answered effectively in chapter conclusions and within the overall conclusion. The overall conclusion is comprehensive; stressing that prison is the wrong place for offenders with mental health issues.

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

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

Footnotes are used in a clear and consistent manner. Dates are cited and this candidate's approach is indicative of best practice. Forty-two references are cited, indicating a high quality piece of work. The bibliography is also high quality and academic in style. Although not mandatory or common, this candidate cites where each footnote is used – a polished approach. It is likely this candidate has read more widely than the evidence presented suggests and might benefit from a further 'works consulted' list in their appendices to demonstrate the full extent of their research. Transcript excerpts and Survey Monkey tables are well organised.

Overall

This is an example of a dissertation that gained full marks.

It has a very strong style of writing, coherent, reflective and well-evidenced. Strong question stems in the framing of the aims leads to a critically evaluative approach. The overall introduction easily achieves the 8 justification marks. This is reinforced by the chapter introductions, which further justify the importance and context of the issue. Appendix 4 shows the table/graph form of Survey Monkey results. Minor improvements could be made, eg the candidate could restate credentials/date of interviews in the appendices – these were mentioned in the methodology. This work may also have benefited from using the candidate's primary research more in support of points. The candidate has included excerpts of interviews, rather than full transcripts. This is deemed good practice as it shows markers where relevant information is (any transcription method is accepted, although excerpts, or highlighted/annotated elements are more useful and economical, compared to a 10-page transcript which needs to be sifted through to find the relevant information).

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