

Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for each element of this project-dissertation.

Candidate 1

Justifying an appropriate, complex, contemporary political or social issue for research (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **8 marks** because of the aims and introduction approach they used. This is a contemporary title with sub-issues linked to the stated hypothesis. The importance and relevance of the issue is clearly explained with contemporary evidence across continents and within Europe. There is debate in this section which weighs the competing views of capital punishment relating both in the United States and the United Kingdom. Each view is supported with trustworthy statistics to demonstrate popular opinion. Chapter introductions are clearly worded and there is enough implicit reference for why this issue continues to be important around the world today to warrant full marks.

Evaluating research methodology (6 marks)

The candidate was awarded **1 mark** because the discussion of their research methods makes a cursory reference to trustworthiness. This section lacks depth and is highly descriptive with no sustained exploration of the validity and reliability of any of the primary and secondary sources used, eg 'surveys are fast and reliable' and the documentary 'Baby's Behind Bars' is not adequately evaluated with regard to trustworthiness. The news articles could have been evaluated for political bias and the ethics of conducting research for this topic could have also been addressed. The candidate makes no mention of what they might do differently if they were to carry out research on this topic again. First person narrative is used, which is acceptable in this section. The candidate also includes Wikipedia, but good practice would have been for the candidate to cite the origin of the source to confirm validity of the post.

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

The candidate was awarded **4 marks** because evidence from the sources supports the candidate's line of argument. There is a good range of valid sources also used to support implicit and explicit conclusions throughout. However, the candidate does not use the sources persuasively and convincingly to score more marks. There is an over reliance on direct quotations which results in poorly presented evidence to support the line of argument.

Analysing the issue (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **5 marks** because there are relevant analytical comments throughout the main body of this dissertation. The analysis includes relevant supporting contemporary evidence about capital punishment, particularly in the United States. Chapter 2 goes on to include some analysis of different perspectives on capital

punishment which support the candidate's line of argument. However, the depth of this candidate's analysis throughout, most notably their analysis of survey results in chapter 1, falls short of earning more marks. Chapter 3 is largely an informative and descriptive account of the criminal justice system in Norway, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

Evaluating arguments and evidence (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **5 marks** because they make valid evaluative comments relevant to the question. There is some degree of evaluation underpinned by the candidate's reasoning which does support the candidate's line of argument. Supporting arguments with evidence is somewhat effective particularly in chapter 2, but weak elsewhere. Counter arguments are particularly weak in chapter 3 and this limits the candidate's overall judgement.

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

The candidate was awarded **6 marks** because the overall conclusion flows from a line of argument showing clear understanding of the issue. Detailed reasoning and evidence is used to gradually build-up and advance a line of argument. However, chapter conclusions are comparatively weaker, particularly chapters 1 and 3. This limits the candidate's ability to persuade the reader with their line of argument. The candidate's chapter conclusions are not effectively reinforced in the overall conclusion, particularly when evaluating the different perspectives associated with capital punishment. A lack of depth throughout keeps the synthesis of evidence in this aspect of the dissertation limited to 6 marks.

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

The candidate was awarded **2 marks** because the footnotes are clear, consistent and accurate throughout. Data from primary and secondary research is effectively integrated to support the candidate's analysis and evaluation. However, the bibliography is inconsistent when referencing sources. From references 11-30 and 32-40 only web links are listed. The appendix is not creditworthy as it provides no evidence of data and there is no analysis of the candidate's research findings.

Overall

Overall, this candidate was awarded **31 out of 50 marks**. It contains a good range of valid evidence and analysis but is disadvantaged by a poor research methods chapter and a descriptive approach in the main body, particularly chapter 3. Improved chapter conclusions would have helped this candidate's line of argument and resulted in more synthesis marks. More care should have been taken with the bibliography and appendix to follow academic conventions in a consistent fashion.

Candidate 2

Justifying an appropriate, complex, contemporary political or social issue for research (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **5 marks** because this an interesting and unique topic which is contemporary in scope. The candidate provides adequate context and justification throughout this introductory section. There is a clear structure which previews each chapter. However, the candidate does not outline different perspectives or viewpoints on the issue of President Trump's success. Different perspectives are not adequately explored to warrant more marks.

Evaluating research methodology (6 marks)

The candidate was awarded **3 marks** because comments are made specifically in relation to four different methods, addressing their reliability in relation to the chosen issue. However, the candidate did not fully evaluate each method beyond addressing the date or potential bias. This section also does not address ethical issues when carrying out research, nor are potential changes to improve research fully developed. Discussion of potential changes are acknowledged but take a 'do more of the same' approach which is not creditworthy.

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

The candidate was awarded **6 marks** because a wide range of sources are convincingly used throughout the dissertation, suggesting ample research undertaken by the candidate. Academic conventions are also adhered to consistently in the bibliography. A wide variety of newspapers, press briefing and books on Trump's presidency are used. Given the nature of the topic, Trump's first 100 days, it is understandable and appropriate to have utilised more news-based sources than might otherwise be the case with other dissertation topics.

Analysing the issue (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **8 marks** because the main chapters provide analysis with supporting evidence throughout. A variety of perspectives on Trump's successes and failures are offered. A wide range of supporting evidence is also included to build a strong and convincing line of argument. Key issues are clearly organised in the three different chapters to further enhance this candidate's analysis.

Evaluating arguments and evidence (8 marks)

The candidate was awarded **6 marks** because they make a number of judgements to demonstrate valid viewpoints and include reasoned consideration of alternative arguments and evidence. A lack of overall chapter conclusions limits further marks being awarded.

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

The candidate was awarded **7 marks** because they draw their line of argument to a clear and valid conclusion which is supported by the evidence presented. However, the line of argument is weakened by a lack of adequate coverage in the conclusion of the negative aspects or viewpoints of Trump's 100 days, which was covered in the main body. The inclusion of chapter conclusions throughout the main body could have enhanced the quality of this dissertation in this element.

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

The candidate was awarded **3 marks** because consistent, parenthetical referencing is used throughout. The bibliography is also organised using appropriate academic conventions. Data from secondary research has been integrated throughout, however the candidate does not include any appendices.

Overall

Overall, this candidate was awarded **38 out of 50 marks**. It is a well-researched dissertation on an interesting political issue. It is clearly structured and includes different perspectives throughout which supports an effective line of argument. However, despite these qualities, the word count of 4,699 is self-penalising and the candidate may have better used the remaining 800 words to further develop points and include chapter conclusions which would have improved this piece of work further.