Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for each question of this question paper.

Candidate 2

Section 2 – Question 1

Choose a play in which manipulation or deception or confusion is a significant feature.

By referring to appropriate techniques, briefly explain the manipulation or deception or confusion and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole.

The candidate was awarded **16 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen *Othello* by William Shakespeare and has focussed on manipulation as a significant feature. The essay centres on Iago's manipulation of Othello.

In terms of knowledge and understanding the candidate demonstrates a secure understanding of Iago's manipulation of Othello throughout the essay. The essay deals initially with Iago's motivations of jealousy and revenge stating that these drive Iago to destroy Othello's relationship with Desdemona. The candidate thereafter sets about discussing the play securely, albeit, chronologically. The candidate references Iago's exchange with Roderigo in Act 1 Scene 1 and notes 'we see how he (Iago) manipulates others to benefit him:' "I follow him to serve my turn upon him".

Furthermore, the candidate securely demonstrates an understanding of Iago's 'unique ability to use the weakness of others against them'. Establishing that Othello 'easily trusts people', the candidate states that Iago will 'lead him to his downfall as someone might lead a donkey where they need to go'.

The candidate demonstrates a secure knowledge of Iago's manipulation by referencing Act 2, where Iago 'sees himself as a spider …hoping to catch his enemies'. With a secure understanding of Iago's manipulation, the candidate establishes Desdemonda's innocence and Iago's determination to "turn her virtue into pitch." In Act 3 Scene 3, the candidate recognises Iago's increasing control of the narrative: 'Iago is controlling all that Othello sees hears and thinks'; further referencing how Iago achieves this manipulation: "Ha! I like not that", "Beware my Lord of jealousy..." In discussing Desdemona's murder, the candidate suggests that Othello 'only relies on Iago' and is so manipulated that he sees himself with 'no other choice' than to kill her. The essay ends securely, stating that although Iago's manipulation is morally wrong it is also 'artful'.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, there is detailed exploration of Iago's manipulation of Othello. The candidate's analysis of Iago's character is detailed: analysing his motivation and his 'unique ability' to manipulate others by exploiting their weaknesses. The analysis and evaluation of Othello's flaws is also detailed: he is too trusting and recognises Othello's 'jealous nature'. However, on occasion the analysis is more clear than detailed. For example, the comment on "Ha! I like not that" and its context is more narrative, than analytical. The candidate refers to 'the audience', implicitly referencing the use of dramatic irony: 'Iago warns the audience that he will manipulate others' view of him'. Foreshadowing is evidenced too, where "work on, my medicine" (Act 4) is highlighted as redolent of "pour(ing) pestilence in his ear" (Act 2) to emphasise Iago's' 'manipulative nature'.

To support the line of argument, the candidate selects textual evidence spanning all five acts of the play. While the expression is in the main, coherently expressed, there are some lapses. But there is an engaged evaluative stance. The candidate is firmly focussed on Iago's manipulation throughout, recognising that it is 'artful' as well as 'wrong'. Interestingly, the candidate concludes that Iago's manipulation has been so successful that even after the death of Desdemona, 'he (Othello) …cannot accept his flaws' and 'does not see his mistake'.

Overall, this essay is secure. The candidate demonstrates secure knowledge and understanding of the text and supports this with a line of argument that is generally coherently structured. On occasion expression and elements of analysis are more clear than detailed. For this reason, the essay just fits into the 18-16 mark range and is awarded **16 marks**.