

OP 1

UNIVERSITIES OF
MANCHESTER LIVERPOOL LEEDS SHEFFIELD AND BIRMINGHAM

JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD

A General Paper
in the General Certificate of Education
Examination

R. A. C. OLIVER
*Professor of Education in the Victoria
University of Manchester*

July 1954

Introduction

1. The Joint Matriculation Board introduced a General Paper into its examinations for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) in 1951.

The General Paper is approved by the Secondary School Examinations Council as a subject of the G.C.E. at the Ordinary level.

A pass in the General Paper counts as a pass in a subject at the Ordinary level for the purposes of University entrance requirements. It is accepted as a subject "not related" to any subject at the Advanced level taken at the same sitting.

2. The syllabus of the Joint Matriculation Board General Paper is as follows:

GENERAL PAPER (one paper of three hours).

Although the paper ranks at the Ordinary level, it will be more suitable for candidates near the end of their Sixth-form or similar higher course.

Questions will be grouped round the following general headings, candidates being required to answer from each of the groups:

1. Current affairs, politics, economics, history and geography.
2. General science: science and its social implications, scientific method.
3. Literature including literary criticism; the fine arts (music, art, films etc.).

Questions on religion and philosophy may be set in any section.

3. The purpose of this paper is to report the results of an investigation of the General Paper set in 1953. The results are based mainly on two sets of data, viz. (1) the grades awarded in the General Paper by the Joint Matriculation Board, and (2) the replies to a questionnaire sent to all headmasters and headmistresses of schools, and principals of further education establishments, who entered candidates in 1953. In addition, the Joint Matriculation Board supplied information about the candidates and schools. The writer is indebted to the Board and to all who replied to the questionnaire for their co-operation, and to his research assistant, Mr. H. J. Butcher, for assistance in the analysis of the data.

I. Analysis of Grades

4. The number of schools (including establishments of further education) entering candidates for the General Paper in each of the three years in which the examination has been held is given in Table 1, together with the number of candidates and the percentage of candidates who passed. A small proportion of the candidates (2.8 per cent. in 1953) were not entered by schools but were "external candidates".

TABLE 1
Schools, candidates and passes in the General Paper 1951-53

	1951	1952	1953
Number of schools	164	167	176
Number of candidates entered	1,756	1,924	2,462
Percentage of entry passing	64.1	55.3	47.2

For purposes of comparison it may be added that the number of candidates for the G.C.E. examinations of the Joint Matriculation Board in all subjects at the Ordinary level in 1953 was 58,889.

5. In the 1953 examination, twenty-four questions were set in the General Paper, eight on each section of the syllabus. Candidates were required to answer five questions, including at least one from each section.

The Joint Matriculation Board awards not "marks" but "grades" on a scale from 0 to 100 at intervals of 5. The minimum grade for a pass is 40.

6. The mean grades of various groups of candidates classified by sex and type of school are given in Table 2.

To make the table more useful to readers interested in statistics, the last column gives the standard deviation (S.D.) of the grades of each group of candidates. Other readers may ignore this column, or interpret it as an indication of the spread of the grades: approximately two-thirds of the candidates have grades within one standard deviation above and below the mean.

TABLE 2
Mean grades of candidates in the General Paper, 1953:
Sex and type of school

Group of candidates	No. of candidates	Mean grade	S.D.
1. All candidates	2,446	37.9	12.6
2. Boys	1,919	37.8	12.9
3. Girls	527	38.2	12.4
4. Boys' schools	1,642	37.9	12.6
5. Girls' schools	361	38.1	12.3
6. Mixed schools	335	38.1	13.9
7. County schools	1,804	37.9	12.6
8. Direct grant schools	331	38.4	12.9
9. Independent schools	203	37.7	12.6
10. Grammar schools	2,306	37.9	12.6
11. Secondary technical schools	32	38.0	11.6
12. Internal candidates	2,378	37.9	12.6
13. External candidates	68	34.4	12.3

A few notes are necessary to explain points which might not be immediately evident in Table 2.

Candidates are classified as boys or girls without regard to their age. Some of the 68 external candidates were in fact adults: the age range was from 17 to 43, the median age being 23.

All secondary schools other than direct grant schools and independent schools are classified as county schools irrespective of their status as maintained, assisted, etc.

Internal candidates are candidates in attendance at schools or establishments for further education. All other candidates are external candidates.

7. The difference between the mean grade of the boys and that of the girls is not statistically significant: neither is the difference between the standard deviations.

The data in Table 2 do not suggest that the General Paper gives any advantage or handicap to either sex or to candidates from different types of schools.

8. As the syllabus indicates, the General Paper (like "Ordinary Alternative" subjects) is intended to be taken by pupils in the Sixth Form. It calls for greater maturity of mind than can be expected of Fifth-form pupils. It is therefore of some interest to compare the mean grades of candidates of different ages. These are given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Mean grades of candidates of different ages

Age of candidates in years and months	No. of candidates	Mean grade	S.D.
Under 16.6	51	33.8	12.0
16.6—16.11	105	35.9	11.1
17.0—17.5	411	35.6	12.2
17.6—17.11	514	38.8	13.1
18.0—18.5	627	38.6	13.0
18.6—18.11	456	39.1	12.7
19.0—19.5	155	36.5	12.4
19.6 and over	127	37.1	11.8

It will be noted that the mean grade of candidates below the normal age of entry to the Sixth Form is lower than the mean grades of candidates of Sixth-form age. After the age of 18-plus candidates are less typical of Sixth-form pupils.

9. An attempt has been made to distinguish broadly between "Arts" candidates and "Science" candidates. The former are candidates sitting, in 1953, at the Advanced level, subjects such as English, History and languages; (Geography has been counted as an Arts subject). The latter offered Advanced mathematics or science subjects in 1953. Some candidates, of course, offered both Arts and Science subjects as well as the General Paper.

TABLE 4
Mean grades of Arts and Science candidates

Candidates sitting at Advanced level	No. of candidates	Mean grade	S.D.
Arts subjects only	905	41.5	13.0
Science subjects only	858	36.2	12.0
Both Arts and Science subjects	110	38.4	12.2

If the "Arts subjects only" group (905) is combined with the "both Arts and Science subjects" group (110), the combined groups (1,015) have a mean grade of 41.1 and a standard deviation of 13.0. The difference between this mean and the mean of the "Science subjects only" group (36.2) is significant at the 1 per cent. level. The non-statistical reader may think of this as meaning that a difference as big as this would not occur "by chance" oftener than 1 in 100 times.

The General Paper includes a section on the arts and a section on science. The answers called for are all of the short "essay" type.

10. The Joint Matriculation Board recommends to the Ministry of Education candidates for State Scholarships. Recommendations are made on the candidates' grades in subjects sat at the Advanced and Scholarship levels. On the same type of evidence the Board also gives, to Local Education Authorities which request it, an opinion about candidates for L.E.A. awards. In 1953 the Board classified candidates whom it considered suitable for L.E.A. awards into three classes, corresponding approximately to (1) scholars, (2) exhibitioners, and (3) others suitable for awards. Some of the candidates for State Scholarships and L.E.A. awards sat the General Paper.

In Table 5 candidates recommended for State Scholarships who had sat the General Paper are compared with all other candidates who sat the General Paper.

TABLE 5
Mean grades in General Paper of State Scholars and others

	No. of candidates	Mean grade	S.D.
State Scholars	134	48.4	12.5
All other candidates	2,312	37.3	12.6

The difference between the mean grades in Table 5 is statistically significant at the 1 per cent. level. (It will be seen from Table 7 that this represents a correlation of 0.20.)

Table 6 similarly compares candidates considered suitable for L.E.A. awards, who had sat the General Paper, with all other candidates.

TABLE 6
Mean grades in General Paper of candidates classified for L.E.A. awards

	No. of candidates	Mean grade	S.D.
Class 1	156	47.7	12.9
Class 2	74	46.2	14.3
Class 3	175	39.3	12.4
All other candidates	2,041	36.7	12.5

The difference between the mean grades of candidates classified and candidates not classified for L.E.A. awards is significant at the 1 per cent. level. (It will be seen from Table 7 that this represents a correlation of 0.26.)

The data in Tables 5 and 6 suggest that the single General Paper to some extent discriminates between candidates in the same direction as do the numerous Advanced and Scholarship papers.

11. Further evidence about what the General Paper is measuring as compared with what other papers are measuring is provided by Table 7. In interpreting this table, the non-statistical reader need only think of the coefficients of correlation as showing how closely the results in the General Paper agree with

those in other subjects: perfect agreement would be indicated by a coefficient of correlation of 1.0, complete lack of agreement by a coefficient of 0.0. The more statistically-minded will wish to know that all the coefficients are product-moment coefficients, with the exception of numbers 17 and 18, which are correlation ratios; and that all the coefficients are significant at the 1 per cent. level, with the exception of numbers 9, 10, 12 and 13, which are non-significant.

12. Before the examination, schools entering candidates are asked to estimate the candidates' ability in each subject. The correlation between the school estimates of some candidates and their grades in the General Paper is given in Table 7, line (1). Not all candidates are included, because some schools did not provide estimates or provided them in a different form from that of the majority of schools.

TABLE 7
Coefficients of correlation between grades in General Paper and other indices of ability in the G.C.E. examinations

Other variable	No. of candidates	Coefficient of correlation
1. School estimate	1,738	0.43
2. History (O)	108	0.55
3. Physics (O)	40	0.50
4. English Literature (O)	89	0.42
5. English Language (O)	424	0.38
6. Chemistry (O)	53	0.38
7. Scripture Knowledge (O)	65	0.37
8. Geography (O)	112	0.30
9. Art (O)	42	0.23
10. Biology (O)	71	0.20
11. French (O)	262	0.20
12. Mathematics (O)	245	0.11
13. Latin (O)	261	0.10
14. Average grade in 3 or more O subjects	228	0.41
15. Average grade in 4 or more O subjects	126	0.40
16. Average grade in 2 or more A subjects	1,794	0.32
17. State Scholarship	134	0.20
18. L.E.A. award	305	0.26

13. In Table 7, lines 2 to 13 state the relationship between candidates' grades in the General Paper and their grades in other subjects which they sat at the Ordinary level in 1953. Candidates may have taken these other subjects at the same sitting for a variety of reasons, e.g. because they had not previously completed their Ordinary level course, or because they had previously failed in the subject.

14. Lines 14—16 of Table 7 are intended to indicate the degree of relationship between ability in the General Paper and the abilities tested at greater length by a number of papers in subjects at the Ordinary and Advanced levels. Line 14 refers to the average grade in subjects at the Ordinary level where at least three such subjects were taken in addition to the General Paper. Line 15 refers to the corresponding average grade where at least four subjects were taken at the Ordinary level. Line 16 relates grades in the General Paper to the average grade in subjects at the Advanced level where two or more were taken.

15. Line 17 indicates the relationship between grades in the General Paper on the one hand and the award or non-award of a State Scholarship. Similarly, line 18 relates grades in the General Paper to classification or non-classification by the Board for L.E.A. awards.

II. Replies to Questionnaire

16. A questionnaire was sent to all schools and further education establishments which had entered candidates for the General Paper in 1953. The heads and principals were invited to answer the following questions:

1. School.

2. Approximate number of pupils:

(a) in school 1952-53:

(b) in Sixth Form 1952-53.

3. How were pupils selected to be candidates for the General Paper?

4. What preparation were pupils given with a view to their sitting the General Paper which they would not have been given otherwise? Please refer, for example, to approximate number of periods per week; members of staff taking part (e.g. headmaster, English mistress, senior science master). A description of any special course would be of particular interest.

5. From the point of view of your own school, what do you think is the value of having a General Paper available in the G.C.E. examination?

6. Any other comments.

The number of questionnaires sent out was 176. Of these 154 (87.5 per cent.) were returned. In a few cases the replies were in the form of letters: these have been included in the results.

17. The schools and further education establishments replying to the questionnaire are not a random sample of schools and establishments entering candidates for the G.C.E. examinations of the Joint Matriculation Board. The total number of schools and further education establishments which entered candidates for the G.C.E. examinations of the Board in 1953 was 719. Thus the 176 schools and establishments entering candidates for the General Paper comprised 24.5 per cent. of the total number, and the 154 schools and establishments replying to the questionnaire represented 21.4 per cent. of the total number.

18. It will be evident from the report on the replies to the questionnaire that many headmasters and headmistresses of secondary schools entered candidates for the General Paper because for one reason or other they themselves believed that their pupils should sit. It should be noted that this cannot necessarily be inferred from the replies of the principals of further education establishments. These replies indicate that in many cases the entering of candidates implied no judgment on the principal's part about the value of the General Paper. A typical attitude of principals may be indicated by the following quotation from one of the replies:

"Should there be a demand in sufficient quantity the College would provide a course of lectures and classes suitable for students wishing to take the paper".

In summarizing the replies to the questionnaire, however, the number of replies expressing any particular opinion has been expressed as a percentage of all replies received, even though some replies expressed no opinion of the respondent; the percentages thus represent a conservative estimate of the prevalence of the opinions.

19. The replies to the questionnaire may be summarized as follows:

Question 3. How were pupils selected to be candidates for the General Paper?

A distinction may first be made between schools in which some selection took place and schools in which there was none. This distinction is not always easy to make. Some schools reply, for example, "No selection. Any pupil who wished to sit was entered." The distinction has been made between schools where there was no selection in the sense that a whole form was entered and schools where less than an entire form was entered even though only a few pupils were excluded from the entry. The number of classified replies was 145. Of these 31 per cent. stated there had been no selection and 69 per cent. mentioned some selection.

20. Where selection had taken place, a variety of practices had been followed. Many schools entered any pupil in the second or third year Sixth Form who wished to sit. Some entered all pupils who were sitting subjects at the Advanced level. Some schools entered pupils from the first year Sixth only. Some entered those who were following a "general course" in the Sixth. Some selected only a few of the ablest pupils. Candidates for Oxford or Cambridge scholarships or entrance were told or encouraged to sit the General Paper for practice. Some schools presented the Science Sixth, which it was thought would particularly benefit from taking a general paper. Some candidates were entered because they needed a pass in another subject at the Ordinary level, or in one "not related" to their Advanced level subjects, to complete their qualifications for entry to universities, training colleges, and the like. In short, the schools used the General Paper for a wide variety of purposes according to their circumstances and needs.

21. *Question 4. What preparation were pupils given with a view to their sitting the General Paper which they would not have been given otherwise?*

The typical answer was a disclaimer of preparation in the sense of the question. Some schools stated that there was no preparation, direct or indirect: pupils were merely made aware of the possibility of sitting the General Paper and were free to enter for it without preparation. The most typical reply, however, was that the school had, before or independently of the introduction of the General Paper, provided courses of some kind which now served to some extent as a preparation for the General Paper; in some cases these courses had been modified or extended to relate them more closely to the General Paper. Such courses may be classified as providing indirect preparation. In other schools new courses had been introduced, or existing courses considerably modified, with the General Paper specifically in mind. Such courses may be classified as constituting direct preparation.

The classification of preparation as direct or indirect is necessarily somewhat arbitrary. The following figures probably exaggerate the amount of direct preparation, since preparation has been classified as direct unless "only indirect preparation" is stated in so many words.

	Replies	
	Number	Per cent.
No preparation at all mentioned	32	21.6
Only indirect preparation	69	46.6
Some direct preparation stated or implied	47	31.8
	148	100.0

Where preparation, whether direct or indirect, is stated or implied, the number of periods per week ranges from 1 to 6, but in most cases it is from 1 to 4 periods and the average is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ periods per week.

22. It would be impossible to summarize briefly the descriptions of the courses mentioned as having a bearing, direct or indirect, on the General Paper. At the one extreme, some schools refer merely to a weekly period for the discussion of current events; at the other extreme a few schools submitted schemes of work carefully thought out in some detail. Usually several members of the school staff, including the head, take part in courses related to the General Paper. Sometimes there are visiting speakers. B.B.C. programmes may be used. The topics of study or discussion are legion—philosophy, religion, current affairs, art, music, science. There may be lectures, lessons, discussions, library periods, essay periods, and so on. Particular books may be studied. Pupils may be encouraged to read newspapers and weeklies. School societies and activities are sometimes mentioned as having an indirect bearing on the General Paper. It is at any rate clear that schools entering candidates for the General Paper are far from following any stereotyped pattern of preparation.

23. *Question 5. From the point of view of your own school, what do you think is the value of having a General Paper available in the G.C.E. examination?*

The replies give a variety of opinions in answer to this question, but it is possible to distinguish a number of points which are made with some frequency in somewhat similar terms. To summarize the replies, these points will be stated in the present writer's terms, then restated by illustrative quotations from the replies received. The percentage of replies which make each point will be given. It will be obvious that one point may be related to another and that some statements in the replies could almost equally well have been classified differently. No statement has been counted under more than one heading. The points are given in descending order of frequency.

Similar points made in reply to Question 6 "Any other comments", have been included with replies to Question 5.

24. (1) The General Paper helps to counteract the possible dangers of specialisation.

Illustrative quotations:

"The topics considered and discussed during the course help to counteract any narrowness of outlook due to specialisation both on the Arts and Science sides of the school."

"The pupils (girls and boys) do not get much general education at home; the school has to give them a great deal. They will work hard at subjects but tend to be narrow."

"Very valuable—it concentrates the attention and interest of boys who might otherwise follow too narrow and specialised a line of study upon topics of general and artistic interest."

Some schools amplify this point in interesting ways, for example:

"Since H.S.C. and S.C. were supplanted by G.C.E., for safety's sake schools tend to avoid the old 'Subsidiary' in final year, e.g. French, German or Latin for the Modern Studies, English Literature for the Classics. These are 'polished off' at O level. The General Paper is a valuable corrective to specialisation in the last two years at school."

"Its value lies:

(a) in the correction that it may afford to an over-specialisation that can so easily characterize Sixth-form work;

(b) that it may help to prepare boys for a fuller enjoyment of University life. As a result of the preliminary stimulus of preparation for a general paper, they may in the University contrive to counteract over-specialisation by greater

ease in, and width of, social contact, e.g. they will have more to talk about, wider interests, less embarrassment, and find more points of contact with fellow-undergraduates;

(c) the fact that, just at a time when their minds are "blossoming out" in the Sixth form, the stimulus from discussions along the lines of the questions set in the General Paper, even if they do not actually take the examination, is extremely valuable."

The number of replies classified as making this point was 37, or 24.0 per cent. of the replies. This is probably an under-estimate, since a number of other replies refer in more general terms to "broadening the mind", "extending the outlook", and the like.

25. (2) The General Paper provides a stimulus (incentive) to pupils.

Illustrative quotations:

"It is an incentive to many, i.e. it makes their interests more active and promotes more careful reading outside school subjects."

"It provides an extra incentive to careful and methodical study."

"To provide a focus (and perhaps a stimulus) for the non-specialist work done in the Sixth, especially the Science Sixth."

"There is a certain amount of kudos attached to success in the examination and some competition amongst second-year Sixth to be allowed to enter. Utilitarians—and many of our boys are such nowadays in the Sixth—see a value in an additional qualification."

Number of replies: 31.

Percentage of replies: 20.1 per cent.

Obviously this point has much in common with others, e.g. (1) and (6).

26. (3) The General Paper provides useful practice for university scholarship examinations.

Illustrative quotations:

"It gives practice in answering general questions which is useful to the considerable number of our boys who have to take general papers in university scholarship examinations."

"The General Paper is taken here since it provides a valuable preparation for the Open Scholarship papers and is also educationally beneficial."

"What is good preparation for Open Scholarship work is also 'fun' to round off a Sixth-form career."

Number of replies: 27.

Percentage of replies: 17.5 per cent.

27. (4) The General Paper is too difficult for the Ordinary level and should be regarded as an Advanced level subject.

The point that the paper was too difficult was made in most cases with reference to the paper set in 1953 particularly.

Illustrative quotations:

"If the paper is set to the Upper Sixth level, it should count as Advanced."

"The paper was as difficult as any General Paper set for University Entrance and stiffer than some—but O level does not presuppose any Sixth-form maturity!"

"The questions set so far in the General Paper have been well chosen. They involve problems of such mature outlook, however, that it is difficult to see how they can be marked at 'Ordinary' standard."

"We have nothing but praise for the paper but it is a complete misnomer to call it an O paper."

"The expected standard, if it is revealed in any way by the type of question set, is much too high to be thought of as O level. If a really good standard is expected to questions which few unacademic adults could answer—the wording and phrasing alone are 'Times' and 'M.G.' quality—my general impression is, then, that the paper should be given 'A' level status."

Number of replies: 24.

Percentage of replies: 15.5 per cent.

28. (5) Taking the General Paper is a good intellectual discipline; it calls for clear thinking, the ability to marshal facts and express oneself on paper.

Illustrative quotations:

"The intellectual discipline of working an examination paper is probably a good thing. A course . . . conducted largely by discussions is apt to be somewhat indeterminate and it is a good mental exercise to crystallize out thoughts floating vaguely through the mind into words written on paper. Writing Maketh an Exact Man, said Bacon."

"It is a good mental exercise for any boy to have to set down clearly general arguments or to have to marshal facts not only in his specialized line."

"It helps to train them in intelligent and discriminating reading of the press and use of radio and television."

"The practice they are given in preparation for taking the paper seems (in the case of the Science Sixth particularly) to give them an increased capacity for expressing themselves on paper."

Number of replies: 21.

Percentage of replies: 13.6 per cent.

29. (6) The implied recognition by university examining bodies of the importance of general education gives it status in the eyes of pupils, parents and others.

Illustrative quotations:

"It gives prestige to the subject."

"It shows to the parents that sixth form education is not merely a vocational, often technical, course."

"The . . . existence of the General Paper indicates to the poorer school (I include my own by comparison with Winchester!) that non-specialist study (or alternatively specialist study of a deeper and more 'extensive' kind) has a value which examiners are prepared to assess."

"I am sure it is good that the girls should learn that critical ability, reasoning power and taste have a recognized value when applied to their immediate experience and not only to text-book subjects."

"We welcome its introduction, as a means of making clear to Sixth-form pupils that the kind of work we have done, now for many years, in our Sixth-form discussions, is regarded by an examining body as of sufficient interest to warrant the setting of a paper."

One headmaster adds the following interesting comment:

"The effect of the paper on parents is interesting. Several working-class families have changed their newspapers and for the first time tried to discuss things other than professional sport in order to help their sons with the General Paper. In one case I know, it didn't produce an examination success but it opened up a new world to mother and father."

Number of replies: 20.

Percentage of replies: 13.0 per cent.

30. (7) The General Paper gives pupils, especially those with fewer cultural opportunities, an idea of what an educated person may be expected to be interested in.

Illustrative quotations:

"It is interesting for boys to take the paper—and to see previous papers—as an indication of the kinds of thing a Sixth-form boy can reasonably be expected to know. It surprises many of them."

"It is difficult for boys who come from 'poor' homes in the cultural sense to begin to appreciate the value of knowledge outside a set examination syllabus. This General Paper, we feel, helps to start a boy by giving him some sort of guide. He is then able to ask for advice on specific lines of reading and study instead of asking vaguely 'where he should start'."

"We live in a very remote, isolated, opinionated district with very limited cultural opportunities. It is very difficult to convince girls that the intellectual and cultural standards we ask for are generally accepted and not merely personal fads. I find that being confronted with the General Paper, and seeing the kind of topics which they are expected to be able to discuss, makes the girls realize that they have contemporaries who are more widely read and who have thought more deeply than they have themselves."

Number of replies: 18.

Percentage of replies: 11.7 per cent.

31. (8) Candidates enjoy the General Paper and the courses leading up to it.

Illustrative quotations:

"I find that the Sixth Formers enjoy the course, and are quite keen about the examination."

"It arouses interest and the boys are keen to take it."

"The boys like taking the General Paper. So far the questions have been well chosen and have provided points of argument among the boys which have made them think."

"Most of the candidates enjoyed the paper. The general opinion was that it gives opportunity 'to make use of what you know and enlarge on your own special interests'. There was considerable discussion among themselves about the paper and I found that their choice of questions was wide and varied."

Number of replies: 16.

Percentage of replies: 10.4 per cent.

32. Other points were made in less than 10 per cent. of the replies and are therefore summarized more briefly.

(9) The General Paper should be required of candidates for university entrance or for scholarships and awards.

Number of replies: 14.

Percentage of replies: 9.1 per cent.

(10) The paper requires too deep a knowledge of particular topics.

Number of replies: 13.

Percentage of replies: 8.4 per cent.

(11) The General Paper helps pupils to see the connections between the various special subjects they study.

Number of replies: 12.

Percentage of replies: 7.8 per cent.

(12) The General Paper is useful to pupils going on to training colleges (or to nursing or secretarial work).

Number of replies: 11.

Percentage of replies: 7.1 per cent.

(13) Studies bearing on the General Paper help to bring Arts and Science pupils into contact with one another.

Number of replies: 9.

Percentage of replies: 5.9 per cent.

(14) The General Paper discriminates well among pupils, successfully picking out the ablest.

Number of replies: 7.

Percentage of replies: 4.5 per cent.

Three or four schools, however, take an opposite view.

(15) A pass in the General Paper is useful to a few pupils in completing the required number of passes at Ordinary level for university entrance.

Number of replies: 7.

Percentage of replies: 4.5 per cent.

Other reasons for valuing the General Paper are given in only a very few replies.

33. A number of replies criticize the General Paper as such or the particular paper set in 1953. The criticisms most frequently repeated have already been quoted under points 4 (too difficult, should be an A subject) and 10 (demands too much specialized knowledge). The criticism that a general paper gives an unfair advantage to candidates from more cultured homes is made in about 5 replies, i.e. 3.2 per cent. of the replies.

(16) Another 12 replies, or 7.8 per cent., contain miscellaneous criticisms on a variety of grounds.

These are illustrated by the following quotations:

"I would not say that it has any particular value."

"No particular value, except that it is a paper that follows the pattern of the course, and gives satisfaction to the girls who wish to take another examination."

"The actual taking of the examination is not now considered of value. The form of the paper allows too much to chance . . . (point 10, 'too much specialized

knowledge demanded', is then made). The value of the courses inspired by the paper is recognized, and these will continue, though the examination is not taken."

"I am not yet quite convinced of the value of taking this paper at all for the G.C.E. examination, as the boys' time is now so very fully occupied with answering papers on their main subjects that it seems rather unkind to add to the burden, but I can see that there may be a different point of view."

"None." (This grammar school enters candidates and provides three periods a week of compulsory courses classifiable as "indirect preparation".)

"No value. Though our curriculum is as liberal as possible, our bias towards the building industry restricts the time which might be given to general reading."

"It has lost its main usefulness for us now that the age-limit has been virtually abolished: it was useful as an extra subject to help these candidates (without sacrificing too much time from their Advanced subjects) to complete matriculation requirements."

"Very little. It may sometimes encourage the boys taking science courses to take a keener interest in reading, debate, etc."

"It provides some encouragement to look wide to those whose horizons might tend to be too narrow, but I do not think we have had many boys who were suffering in this way."

34. The replies to questions 5 and 6 of the questionnaire are summarized for convenience in Table 8.

TABLE 8
Opinions about the value of the General Paper

Type of statement	No. of replies	Percentage of replies
1. Counteracts dangers of specialisation	37	24.0
2. Provides stimulus, incentive	31	20.1
3. Useful practice for scholarship examinations	27	17.5
4. Too difficult for O level, should be A	24	15.5
5. Good intellectual discipline	21	13.6
6. Gives status to general education	20	13.0
7. Gives idea of educated person's interests	18	11.7
8. Candidates enjoy paper and courses	16	10.4
9. Should be required for entrance or scholarships	14	9.1
10. Requires too much specialized knowledge	13	8.4
11. Shows interrelations of subjects	12	7.8
12. Useful preparation for Training College	11	7.1
13. Brings Arts and Science pupils into contact	9	5.9
14. Discriminates, picks out scholarship quality	7	4.5
15. Useful in completing university entrance qualifications	7	4.5
16. Miscellaneous criticisms	12	7.8

35. It is not the intention in this paper to urge any particular policy for the future use of general papers, but merely to add something to the scanty store of facts about one such paper and the way in which it is being used by schools.

PRINTED FOR THE JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD
BY
MORRIS & YEAMAN (PRINTERS) LTD., 10, SHORT STREET, CITY ROAD,
MANCHESTER, 15

15920.7.54