

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Media Studies

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

**Media Studies
Advanced Higher**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	7
Pre appeal	7
Post appeal	7

Number of entries in 2002	10
Pre appeal	10
Post appeal	

General comments

Entries from two centres this session, neither the same centre as last session.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Maximum Mark available – 60 marks

C	30 marks
B	36 marks
A	42 marks
Upper A	50 marks

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries set at 50%, 60% and 70% of the maximum mark.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Better pass rate this session because candidates better prepared in the requirements for the external exam and dissertation.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

In the dissertation, candidates performed better than last year. Candidates who did well in the dissertation evaluated their sources, and candidates who did not do this did less well.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Where candidates did not evaluate sources in dissertation, results were unsatisfactory.

Areas of common misunderstanding

In Section 1, Question 1, candidates who answered this question failed to appreciate the difference between interpersonal communication and what the question was asking ie the impact of the mass media on society. For example, candidates mentioned the convenience to the individual of personal stereos and mobile phones, instead of referring to the impact of, and the consequences of, instantaneous reporting by the mass media of events at home and abroad. Candidates at this level would be expected to comment on the social, political and even legal consequences arising from instantaneous reporting by the mass media and to use current/recent examples to illustrate their points.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Candidates must be aware that the evaluation of sources is a vital part of the dissertation. It is a basic premiss of Media Studies that all kinds of communication are regarded in a critical light – nothing is taken at face value. Those candidates who evaluated their sources of information in detail were those who did best. The candidates who simply listed their sources but did not deconstruct these could not pass. Many candidates assume that the dissertation is an essay which is compiled from researched information. Centres must stress that this information should never be taken straight, but evaluated and criticised. This is especially necessary in Media Studies where many of the websites are put out by the media industries themselves and are therefore biased. Evaluation of sources should form a large proportion of the dissertation. This is also a safeguard against candidates downloading material from the internet, stringing it together and presenting it as their own. SQA is very aware that this is a real possibility with project-based assessments.

Very few candidates chose to answer a question from Section 1. Those who did attempt this did not do well because they did not discuss the statement – the candidates did not deal with social and political consequences, but merely asserted that advances in technology matched individuals' impatience for communication. Candidates at this level should have a greater awareness of the centrality of the media in society in general. In the Analysis Section, Q2 was often answered badly because candidates did not discuss the statement as asked.

Centres should also advise candidates that a good grasp of the key aspects of Media Studies, as detailed in lower levels of the subject, is vital. Too many candidates displayed weak understanding of, for example, Representation and Narrative.

Centres should advise candidates that, as well as showing the strengths and weaknesses of analytical methods, they must always apply these to a text. Many candidates made unsupported assertions – everything must be justified with detailed textual references.

In the Production Section candidates who did badly made only sketchy references to their own products. It is as important at this level as at all other levels that candidates display the knowledge and understanding acquired in the Production Unit. Too many unsupported generalisations.