



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Media Studies
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The pass rate in 2010 was higher than in previous years, and reflected observations made by Markers that there was a general improvement in the demonstration and application of conceptual knowledge in analysis, as well as in relation to the demands and expectations of production questions.

The characteristics of adequate and inadequate responses in both components of external assessment remain fairly constant. Many excellent answers demonstrated an understanding of analysis or production contexts that related to but went beyond the confines of their own particular text(s). Centres are to be commended on their preparation in this respect, as it helped candidates to respond to the demands of an unseen question. However, in Paper 1, a failure by many candidates to respond to the terms of analysis questions or demands of production questions is often the most significant factor in the decision to award fewer than 20 marks out of 40.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Unseen Analysis Folio

Candidates performed well when:

- ◆ equal attention was paid to Categories and Language
- ◆ attempts were made to transfer existing analytical knowledge to the stimulus of the unseen text by providing detailed exemplification of a range of codes and categories
- ◆ discussion, where appropriate, considered the cumulative effects of textual elements as well as their individual connotations
- ◆ there was a genuine attempt to respond to the stimulus of the text rather than produce a general description of genre, purpose and/or anticipated codes

Paper 1, Section 1: Media Analysis

Candidates performed well when:

- ◆ a clear attempt was made to discuss and answer the question set, thereby demonstrating performance at a level beyond the basic analytical requirements of Unit assessment
- ◆ the attempt to answer the question demonstrated knowledge and understanding of how the constructed nature of their text reflects practices, contexts and/or issues throughout the mass media
- ◆ in their analysis of each key aspect:
 - understanding of specific key aspect concepts was demonstrated
 - justification of concepts from one media text studied was specific and detailed
 - integration with other key aspects was as directed by the question

Paper 1, Section 2: Media Production

Candidates performed well in response to the reflective question when they:

- ◆ evaluated specific details of the content and style of their final product in terms of their original brief, purpose or audience as appropriate
- ◆ wrote from a production perspective that conveyed that their text had been actively planned and could be objectively evaluated
- ◆ phrased or supported their evaluation using key aspects as directed by the question

Candidates performed well in response to creative questions when:

- ◆ a range of technical and cultural codes were given for the planned text
- ◆ planned codes and content were justified in terms of their intended individual and/or cumulative meanings or effects
- ◆ in the advertising brief question, planned codes and content were also justified in terms of targeting an audience or achieving a purpose
- ◆ in the scenario-based question, planned codes were based on realising the specific details of the scenario
- ◆ in the scenario-based question, production issues discussed were specific to the details of the scenario

Areas which candidates found demanding

Unseen Analysis folio

Candidates had difficulty accessing the available marks when:

- ◆ there was an imbalance in the attention to Categories and Language
- ◆ pre-existing knowledge about categories being analysed was reproduced without specific application to and exemplification from the unseen text
- ◆ codes were identified but not analysed
- ◆ the response was not of the depth and detail of analysis required at Higher level, ie it was characterised by explanation or description rather than analysis

Paper 1: Analysis

Candidates had difficulty accessing the available marks when:

- ◆ Categories or Language was one of the three aspects used to answer the question
- ◆ fewer than three of the key aspects being assessed were adequately analysed
- ◆ understanding of specific Key Aspect concepts was not clearly demonstrated
- ◆ textual exemplification of concepts or argument was insufficient
- ◆ there was insufficient integration of Key Aspects as directed by the question
- ◆ there was little discussion of the terms of the question

Paper 1: Production

Candidates had difficulty accessing the available marks in the reflective question when:

- ◆ evaluative comments were generalised opinions rather than linked to production processes or key aspects
- ◆ the response was mainly a description of the product, even when that description was phrased in terms of the key aspects
- ◆ the specified key aspect was not referenced

Candidates had difficulty accessing the available marks in the creative questions when:

- ◆ content, shots or technical elements were described but no adequate production perspective justification given for their inclusion
- ◆ the codes given were very narrow in range, for example only about camera angle or font
- ◆ knowledge of production processes was reproduced but not discussed in relation to the specifics of the brief or scenario; in these cases, the candidate could only gain limited credit for what was essentially a prepared essay on the mechanics of production
- ◆ time was spent justifying audience or medium instead of on the planned codes and content
- ◆ in the scenario question, time was spent detailing plans for such things as casting, synergy, budgetary considerations or marketing, none of which are requested by the question or rewarded by the marking criteria
- ◆ codes and content planned were not closely based on the specifics of the brief or scenario

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Unseen Analysis

Centres should ensure that the arrangements for Unseen Analysis follow the specifications given in the Course Assessment Pack for Higher, available on the SQA website. This pack gives detailed advice on the selection of texts, and the organisation and administration of the Unseen Analysis.

Although this paper is generally unproblematic for centres, candidates should be prepared in such a way that they understand the following:

- ◆ Both Categories and Language should be analysed equally.
- ◆ Knowledge about Categories and Language must be applied to the text specific to the assessment. Candidates will not pass if they simply produce learned information (eg about genre) without specific analysis of how this applies to or is evident in the text they have been given on the day of assessment.
- ◆ The key aspects being assessed are Categories and Language. These should be the focus in the response produced and no others need be referenced to gain the highest marks. However, the candidate may judge it appropriate to refer to other key aspects. This is acceptable and will be given credit if any such references are clearly

contextualised as part of the analysis of Categories or Language, otherwise any such references are likely to be ignored.

- ◆ Responses need not be written in an essay format, and some candidates may find it helpful to use sub-headings in their analysis.

Paper 1: Media Analysis

Failure to respond adequately to the terms of the question is a significantly re-occurring characteristic of inadequate answers. For this reason, we recommend that centres give as much time as possible to teaching and learning in this respect. Once the candidate is secure in his/her knowledge of the Key Aspects of the text being studied, it might be a useful starting point in exam preparation to write statements linking these.

Once the candidate can confidently write about the implications for or of Key Aspects in the construction of the text, time should be spent examining past papers. This will reveal that, essentially, all analysis questions are centred on the concept of construction, and specific questions detail the approach the candidate should take. Candidates could practise writing introductions, conclusions and linking/signposting phrases that convey an effort to respond to the terms of the question.

The following should be emphasised:

- ◆ Questions ask the candidates to do more than that required in the Unit assessments, so candidates must be prepared to answer a variety of potential questions centred on particular Key Aspects. The simple reproduction of Unit assessment is inadequate; a candidate must make an attempt to answer the question set in order to achieve a pass.
- ◆ Answers must show how Key Aspects integrate with one another. Questions are constructed around the concept of integration.
- ◆ Whilst candidates are not expected to cover every concept as detailed in the Arrangements, they must be prepared to cover those required by the question. So, in relation to Representation, candidates should be prepared to analyse selection, portrayal and/or ideological discourses as required. In Audience they should be prepared to analyse target audience, mode of address, preferred reading and/or differential decoding. In Narrative, structure and/or codes may be asked for. An analysis of Institution must detail specific internal and/or external controls and their influence on the text. Discussion of key aspects in a general way without reference to one or more of these component concepts will be judged inadequate.
- ◆ Candidates must give detailed textual examples in support of their discussion of the question and/or concepts. Where, for example, a film or TV series or a newspaper or magazine title has been studied, specific reference should be made to a particular programme or edition.
- ◆ The Analysis section examines candidates' abilities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of at least three of the Key Aspects from Narrative, Representation, Audience and Institutions. Candidates may wish to refer to other relevant Key Aspects to support analysis. However, to gain credit for doing so, any such references must clearly support the main three they are using. Categories and Language must not be used as standalone Key Aspects in this section.

Paper 1: Media Production

Candidates should be advised of the following:

- ◆ Candidates should ensure that they prepare as fully for this section as for the Media Analysis section and Unseen Analysis folio, as it is marked just as rigorously against the same level of standards.
- ◆ Candidates must make an effort to answer the question set and write from a production point of view. They should not produce a learned response.
- ◆ In response to reflective questions, candidates should be prepared to discuss such things as their production experience, knowledge, constraints and opportunities, and the relationship between these and the active planning, production or evaluation of their own text. They should be prepared to answer questions that ask them to demonstrate knowledge of what happens at the specific stages of media production, and how the decisions that they made at these stages relate to the Key Aspects that underpin the Course. Any one production stage from planning, implementing or evaluation may be demanded by the question. Any one of Categories, Language, Narrative, Representation, Audience or Institution may be named as one of the three Key Aspects demanded by the question.
- ◆ Reflective answers that consist mainly of a production diary, Unit evaluation or product description will be inadequate. Although the candidate might reference aspects of the production schedule, evaluate choices made or describe parts of the product made, any such references should be part of a response that, as per the terms of the question, reflects on the active planning, construction or evaluation of their text according to a number of factors.
- ◆ In response to creative questions, candidates should ensure that they include all the elements required by the question.
- ◆ Candidates should justify creative decisions by referring as appropriate to details in the brief or scenario or the meanings intended. No matter how detailed, a description of technical and cultural codes or any other element without justification is inadequate.
- ◆ In creative questions, an attempt to use media production knowledge to genuinely respond to the stimulus of the brief or scenario with justifications will be better rewarded than a prepared answer about production practices.
- ◆ In creative questions, candidates should **not** spend time justifying audience or medium; these need simply to be indicated. Candidates who do spend time justifying these tend to use up valuable time writing information which is irrelevant.
- ◆ In the scenario question, candidates should **not** spend time discussing casting, technology or concepts such as synergy. Such information is not required by the question and is not rewarded.
- ◆ In the scenario question, candidates should plan how to create or report on the **specific** narrative details given. Responses that seem to be for a completely different narrative will not be well rewarded. It has become obvious that some candidates come to the exam with a pre-prepared scenario that they reproduce and try to link it somehow to the one given. Others try to make the scenario details fit the conventions of a fictional genre they are familiar with, even where the scenario clearly does not belong to that genre. As a result, appropriate treatment of specific details in the narrative becomes difficult to plan and justify, and low marks are the result.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	764
Number of resulted entries in 2010	801

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark — 100				
A	12.5%	12.5%	100	70
B	25.7%	38.2%	206	58
C	28.7%	66.9%	230	47
D	13.5%	80.4%	108	41
No award	19.6%	100.0%	157	—

General commentary on grade boundaries

While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as Arrangements evolve and change.