



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Media Studies</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</b>

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

There was a large variation in the distribution of marks and it was commented on by Markers that candidates varied widely in knowledge. Some candidates did not do well because of the limited number of questions they attempted, missing out several questions in both Sections of Paper 1.

## Paper 1

Candidates varied in their level of knowledge and understanding. In Paper 1, there were candidates who did not attempt several questions on Representation and/or Institution in Section 1, Media Analysis.

In Section 2, Media Production, Questions 1 (c) and (d), which question candidates on specific codes in the product that was made, and on the construction of a representation, were omitted or the answers given were only brief statements by some candidates.

Markers also commented that although candidates understood the Key Aspects, they did not refer closely to the text where this was specified in the question.

Many questions in Section 1, Media Analysis, asked candidates to 'Give reasons by referring closely to the text' or, 'Describe in detail by close reference to a media text'.

Similarly, in Section 2, Media Production, in Question 1, the reflective question, candidates were asked to describe how codes were used in the product they made, and how a representation was constructed in their product, and to give a detailed description of how institutional factors affected decisions taken in the making of the product. All of these questions asked either for textual reference or for a detailed response.

In the Advertising Brief (Question 2) and in the Scenario Question (Question 2), candidates were asked to give reasons for their design decisions and treatment decisions. These questions required more than brief statements. The many candidates who were awarded a Grade D or a No Award were not giving enough attention to these types of question.

More positively, there was evidence that candidates enjoyed their production experience, and there were also many well prepared candidates who answered well in all questions.

## Unseen Analysis

The average mark for Unseen Analysis was similar to previous years.

Some excellent texts were chosen; film posters, opening sequences or extracts from obvious 'genre' films offered candidates rich texts.

In Paper 2, Unseen Analysis, some candidates' performances were affected by the fact that the Instrument of Assessment they were given did not include questions from the Unseen

Analysis Question Bank. For example, candidates were asked questions – worth up to four marks – on tone or on audience.

Questions that do not offer candidates the opportunity to gain a full twenty marks – that do not come from the item bank – can easily affect the grades candidates achieve. This has been a regular feature of Unseen Analysis over the years.

Centres are urged as a priority to use the item bank when constructing the Instrument of Assessment. Although the Unseen Analysis text is set by the Centre, the Instrument of Assessment is selected from the Intermediate 1 Unseen Analysis question item bank. This is an External Assessment component of the exam. Centres should select questions only from the Unseen Analysis item bank. There is a choice of Unseen Analysis questions available from within the item bank.

Click here to view the Intermediate 1 Unseen Analysis Question item bank:  
[http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/Media\\_Studies\\_Unseen\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Media_Studies_Unseen_Analysis.pdf)

## **Areas in which candidates performed well**

### **Paper 1**

In Section 1, Media Analysis, the texts chosen were mainly rich and offered candidates many opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. For example, Hollywood feature films, television adverts and cinema trailers all gave candidates scope and offered candidates plenty to write about.

Well prepared candidates answered well on most aspects of Section 1.

In Section 2, Media Production, the best answers for Question 1, the reflective question, showed a good understanding of how to overcome or deal with specific constraints. Also, target audience factors were clearly understood and candidates wrote well about how the product had to appeal to the target audience(s). Also, the answers on codes used in the production were well selected to exemplify the thinking behind their use.

There were good answers for Question 2, the Advertising Brief question on road safety, with good reasons given for design choices. Posters that would appeal to a younger audience were particularly well designed and justified.

Candidates who attempted Question 3, the scenario question, were well prepared and justified decisions well.

### **Paper 2: Unseen Analysis**

As in previous years, candidates did well in questions on language. Questions on technical and cultural codes were well answered and many candidates were well prepared.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Paper 1**

In Section 1, Media Analysis, Question 3 (c) was very challenging for all candidates. Candidates were unable to describe the connection between the narrative structure of the text and audience pleasure. As a result, the grade boundaries were adjusted to take this into account.

In Section 2, Media Production, Question 1 (the reflective production question), the candidates' evident close involvement in constructing a product was not always translated into Media Studies terms in their answers.

Question 1 (d) was worth 16 marks and asked about the use of codes in the product that was planned and made. More opportunities could have been taken to write about the specific codes used when constructing the product – and candidates did not always write fully about the reasons for the codes chosen to construct their product.

When candidates were asked to write about how two institutional factors affected the decisions made when planning and making their product, the answers were often simply a statement of an imposed limitation inflicted on the group, rather than solutions to limited, specific constraints. Constraints reflect the reality of the production process, and many candidates did not take the opportunity to write about how specific limitations were taken account of when analysing the brief from the outset or how they were satisfactorily navigated in the production process.

### **Paper 2: Unseen Analysis**

It was widely commented by Markers that candidates did not do well answering Unseen Analysis questions on medium and form. It is a fact that, for many candidates, questions on the medium of the unseen text are too demanding: they often simply provide a restatement of information given in the flyleaf. How the medium of the text can be described by using specific details 'in' the unseen text was too challenging for many candidates.

Similarly, questions on the 'form' of the unseen text have little resonance with candidates. The answers given often resulted in writing a little about the genre of the unseen text, and where this was an excerpt, candidates found little to write about.

It may be that for some candidates 'medium' and 'form' are considered to be meta-textual features about which nothing particular can be written relevant to the specific text seen for the first time in an Unseen Analysis exam. How to gain up to four marks in a question on the medium or the form of the unseen text continues, as in previous years, to elude candidates.

The following terms in Unseen Analysis questions (from the Question item bank) caused some candidates problems: 'graphics', 'character formatting', 'serif' and 'sans serif'. Some candidates showed little or no understanding of their meaning.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **Paper 1**

#### **Section 1 — Media Analysis**

Analysis questions focus on the candidate being able to describe the constructed nature of the text and on how the influence of contextual factors such as audience and institution can be seen in specific ways. Many questions in this section are worth at least six marks, and often eight or more marks. It may be necessary to familiarise candidates with how to use specific textual details when responding to these questions. Generally, candidates performed better in Section 1, Media Analysis, than in Section 2, Media Production.

#### **Section 2 — Media Production**

Question 1, the reflective question on the media product made as part of a group, is often less successfully answered because candidates do not write sufficiently specific answers. Familiarity with how to give relevant and specific details would greatly improve candidates' answers.

Group production offers the candidates a way of solving quite straightforward specific and limited (small scale) production challenges. If candidates indicate in an answer that they could not, for example, leave the school or college campus, or use copyrighted material, or could not afford expensive props/hardware/software or have large numbers of personnel, they should also perhaps describe a straightforward solution, perhaps involving simple alternatives more ready to hand. By doing this the answers on constraints on the production can focus on the group's success in planning and carrying out solutions. Similarly, familiarity with specific use of codes and their reasons would boost candidates' answers.

In Question 2, Advertising Brief, and Question 3, Scenario, candidates who can justify their decisions gain higher marks. A focus on how to justify choices/decisions in these would benefit candidates.

#### **Unseen Analysis**

The question bank should be exclusively the source for the Instrument of Assessment for Unseen Analysis at Intermediate 1. Click here to view the Intermediate 1 Unseen Analysis Question item bank:

[http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/Media\\_Studies\\_Unseen\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Media_Studies_Unseen_Analysis.pdf)

There is an imbalance in responses to questions in Categories and Language: frequently in Unseen Analysis candidates do much better in Language than in Categories questions.

Candidates should have practice and guidance in how to answer fully developed answers on specific categories, especially if using questions on 'medium' and 'form'.

Candidates should be familiar with the terminology used in questions from the Unseen Analysis Question Bank – for example, 'graphics', 'character formatting', 'serif' and 'sans serif'.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	493
Number of resulted entries in 2010	528

## 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	16.3%	16.3%	86	62
B	17.6%	33.9%	93	51
C	20.8%	54.7%	110	41
D	8.9%	63.6%	47	36
No award	36.4%	100.0%	192	—

### 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.