



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Photography for the Media PBNC
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 creative responses to the themes were imaginative and challenging, the marking team were at times amazed by the depth and quality of the presentations. Where research was included this led to a better response to the theme, research should include a range of different aspects, e.g. other people's work, planning diagrams, contact sheets etc. All of this should also be annotated to show how the ideas have developed and that a process of selection has been carried out. Merely including a list of websites is not research.

Selection of an appropriate theme is pivotal to a good response, candidates should look closely at their selections to ensure that elements such as access, cost, travel time etc. do not prohibit the production of an appropriate presentation.

Timescales to achieve the projects were sometimes a little hopeful and did not allow for possible problems such as weather or people not turning up.

The mixing of digital and traditional images is not recommended as one type always overshadows the other. If work is to be presented in book form try to ensure that all the images are oriented the same way, you never look at a book and have to turn it 90 degrees to view an image.

Generally the presentations were of a good standard with well researched and developed themes and mature holistic evaluations.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates produced a well thought out and structured project, with the proposal setting out an achievable objective, identifying areas for potential research, realistic timescales and appropriate equipment required.

The development of the work was at times outstanding with work of a standard that many professionals would be proud to call their own. The varied projects and creative interpretations produced exciting high quality results which were reflected in the resultant marks.

The research presented was relevant and clearly identified the aim and direction of the project. Clear links with researched images showed how candidates developed ideas and processed these into the final images.

This year there was a marked improvement in the Evaluation section of the Project and evidence shows that candidates have moved away from simply commenting on each image to a more holistic and analytical approach to the overall project.

The presentation styles were varied and in most cases complimented the work.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Within the proposal the candidates must ensure that they have clearly identified which theme they have chosen. This was omitted in a number of projects.

Technical understanding of the process of photography appeared to be lacking in a number of candidates' work. The basic concepts of depth of field or shutter speeds seemed to be ignored by some. Focus yet again was left to the camera and at times missed completely. The use of digital imaging has increased however the quality of the digital images has not. This was mainly due to candidates enlarging files that were obviously too small, candidates must remember that the original digital file must be of an appropriate size at the time of capture to produce an A5 or A4 image. The media that candidates output their images onto is also of immense

importance and centres need to be aware that the use of plain paper will not produce photographic quality prints. Over saturation also reduced image quality. Too many candidates submitted images with marks and blemishes on digital images which is unacceptable as these are easily corrected in any image editing programme. Candidates should also be aware that dust on the cameras sensor will produce repetitive marks on the final image.

Candidates should be aware what effect different adhesives have on mounted prints as some glues distorted images and detracted from the image quality.

Timescales/timelines for the project must be included in the proposal, candidates should realise that more than one day is required to produce a competent project.

Candidates must remember that the proposal should be 500 words and the evaluation 1000 words, there is a 10% margin up or down, however a 200 word proposal is unacceptable as is a 2000 word evaluation.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- A number of candidates failed to submit the proposal or the evaluation and sometimes both. Candidates often referred to the proposal within the research which indicated that a proposal had been produced. Centres should ensure that all elements have been submitted.
- Some presentations did not have the correct number of images - 12 are required.
- The inclusion of the Unit work from all the supporting Units does not in any way help the candidates and may cause some confusion at the marking stage.
- Some centres appeared to be using laser printers to produce the final output however the quality of the prints was not photographic standard. Prints produced on low quality image media e.g. plain paper disadvantaged the candidates.
- Some centres using digital cameras appear to have blemish marks on the sensor chip as the same marks appeared on a range of candidates work. Sensor chips should not be cleaned by the candidates but by a qualified technician or photographic professional.
- Digital file size was again a problem. Centres should be aware that an A4 image requires a large digital file.

Within the presentation folders I would recommend that centres encourage candidates to present their work in a logical order:-

Proposal	-	1 sheet – 500 words
Development	-	12 images
Evaluation	-	4 sheets (approx) 1000 words

Research evidence in a separate folder

Consistency of image quality was an issue for some candidates' presentations with candidates commenting in the evaluation that the images produced were not the same as the ones on screen. Colour management of digital printers is an issue that some centres may have to address.

Art and Design: Photography for the Media Higher (PBNC) Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	537
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	768
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 200				
A	27.6%	27.6%	212	140
B	38.2%	65.8%	293	120
C	25.7%	91.4%	197	100
D	1.7%	93.1%	13	90
No award	6.9%	100.0%	53	-

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 SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.