



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Photography for the Media
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 two most popular themes were the 'Natural World' and 'Youth Culture', with the theme 'The Camera Cannot Lie' a low third. The general response to the themes was good but not as inspiring as in previous years. There was a noticeable drop in 'over-editing' which indicates that centres are responding to advice.

Centres are reminded that this Course was revised in July 2010 and that they should enter future candidates for Higher Photography C06M 12 and its associated Units.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Where candidates produced well researched Plans and worked within the limits of their equipment, this was reflected in their overall project and they achieved excellent grades.

Candidates who approached the themes in an imaginative way tended to produce more interesting thematic development.

Generally, the submissions provided clear evidence of the underpinning process and techniques.

Research in general has shown a marked improvement with candidates focusing on the issues related to their chosen theme.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Technical quality of the final prints impacted on candidate marks; this applied to both traditional wet process prints and digital prints.

Plans were sometimes vague and rambling giving little or no indication of direction of the project.

Some candidates were over ambitious in their choice of assignment and struggled to present a competent project; this also indicated lack of research at the planning stage.

The theme 'The Camera Cannot Lie' continues to be misinterpreted with most omitting to 'support or refute this statement'. This will hopefully be less of an issue in future as new themes have been introduced as part of the recent revision to the Higher Course.

Evaluation continues to be the weakest area of the award with many candidates giving a description of the process rather than any effective evaluative comment.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Ensure that each candidate has submitted all the required elements of the award.

Encourage candidates to present work in a logical and clear manner.

Do not send work that has no link to the Higher award.

Encourage candidates to engage with the process through annotation, labelling, diagrams, etc.

Ensure that candidates include timescales for their projects and that these are realistic.

Digital printers need to be capable of producing photographic quality prints; centres may need to consider out-sourcing this if their centre equipment is found wanting.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	768
Number of resulted entries in 2010	947

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	28.6%	28.6%	271	140
B	32.2%	60.8%	305	120
C	31.5%	92.3%	298	100
D	3.4%	95.7%	32	90
No award	4.3%	100.0%	41	—

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.