



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Media Studies
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

Overall, candidate attainment is very similar to previous years. There is much evidence of fully prepared candidates being taught by experienced and committed professionals.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Unseen Analysis

The question bank is mostly being used correctly, and with careful thought as to how certain questions work better for certain texts. Markers reported that there were some excellent responses.

Film posters and trailers, and commercial adverts, were the most common types of text used for analysis; candidates had opportunities to perform well where these had clear genre markers, purposes and/or conventional uses of media language, and were rich in detail. Questions on technical and cultural codes were answered well.

Question paper Section One

At a minimum, candidates attained a pass when they demonstrated detailed knowledge of two key aspects of a specific text, and linked these in some way to each other as the question asked. As in previous years, few candidates chose to answer Question 4 (Institutions). Questions on Narrative (question 1) and Representation (question 2) were mainly answered well. A wide range of narrative theorists was discussed, including Todorov, Campbell, Barthes and Propp.

Question paper Section Two

Candidates who used and justified a range of codes in their responses to the creative questions were well rewarded. Close attention to achieving the purpose of the advertising brief, or realising specific details of the scenario, led to answers that clearly demonstrated a production perspective. There were some highly creative responses, particularly given the time constraints for these questions. The dramatic nature of the scenario led to some highly original uses of media codes to create particular effects.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Unseen Analysis

Sometimes the text given for analysis was either too basic for an Intermediate 2 level of analysis, or too long, which often resulted in superficial listing of textual elements at the expense of analysis.

Question paper Section One

Many of the candidates who did not perform well in this section only analysed one key aspect adequately, the second typically being thin, or entirely missing.

A significant number of candidates in a particular centre used 'Twitter' as the focus of their analysis; performance was generally poor in these cases. Candidates were sometimes able to describe Twitter in audience or institutional terms, but as it is better categorised as a micro-blogging/social messaging service, forum or marketing tool, not a media text, candidates found it extremely difficult to apply analysis concepts in the ways required by this section.

Question paper Section Two

Poor reflective answers were characterised by a tendency to discuss the final product rather than focus on planning/pre-production, as required by the question. Some candidates ignored the requirement to discuss Representation, and simply described the process of making their product.

For the creative/scenario questions, some candidates spent too long on the storyboards and drawings, instead of on the justifications for their decisions. The scenario question was done well when the candidates remembered to adhere to the content of the **extract**, and not waste time planning entire media texts.

Some candidates spent too long on section 1, to the detriment of section 2.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Unseen Analysis

Centres must select texts for the unseen analysis carefully. Short film/television clips, or detailed film posters can work very well because the consumption time is less, leaving candidates time to write down their responses. Texts that make use of clear generic conventions work best, as they often use technical and cultural codes in accessible ways. Studying similar texts beforehand is crucial.

As in previous years, it is advisable to avoid questions on the medium of the text, since these often produce confused responses, it has been found. Markers commented that giving candidates only two Categories questions, one of which is Medium, is too limiting — candidates may not do well as a result. Questions on Genre, Purpose and Tone produce much more focused answers, enabling candidates to deal readily with specific details in the text. These three Categories questions give candidates scope to do well. This is important when dealing with an unseen text within a limited time, under exam conditions.

Question paper Section One

Candidates should perhaps take time to plan the answer to ensure that at least two Key Aspects are dealt with. Candidates should remember that they are answering a **specific**

question, and overly-prepared generic responses to questions on key aspects will not merit high marks.

Question paper Section Two

Candidates should be advised that the two most common reasons for failing the reflective question are simply describing the product made in terms of key aspects, or reproducing a production diary. The reflective question demands that candidates write about the relationship between a given stage of the production process and the product planned or made. More practice in how to use the Key Aspects in the reflective essay would greatly help candidates in the future.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	895
Number of resulted entries in 2014	612

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	14.2%	14.2%	87	69
B	19.1%	33.3%	117	57
C	25.5%	58.8%	156	45
D	13.1%	71.9%	80	39
No award	28.1%	-	172	-

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.