



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Media Studies
Level	Intermediate 1

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

Markers commented on the fact there was a number of very well-prepared candidates. Weaker candidates, however, were seen to have some difficulties with certain specific topics, which will be explained below.

In Paper 1, generally, candidates performed better in Section 1, Media Analysis, than in Section 2, Media Production.

In Paper 2, Unseen Analysis, candidates performed better in language questions than in categories.

There are still centres not using questions from the Intermediate 1 Unseen Analysis Question Bank. This disadvantages candidates. Some centres are also not giving sufficient balance between categories and language questions. There must be a minimum of eight marks allocated to both categories and language questions in the instrument of assessment.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1

Section 1: Media Analysis

In Section 1, Media Analysis, the texts chosen were mainly rich and offered candidates the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

Hollywood feature films, or an episode of a drama series, in particular offered candidates plenty to write about.

There were very strong answers given by well-prepared candidates who knew how to answer relevantly.

Many candidates showed a good knowledge of representation and narrative.

As in previous years, well prepared candidates answered well on most aspects of Section 1.

In Section 2, Media Production, Question 1, the reflective question on a group production, the best answers showed a good understanding of how to overcome or deal with specific constraints. Also, for Question 1 (e) worth 16 marks, on codes used in the group production, the best answers explained fully how the specific codes they selected revealed the reasons for their use.

There were good answers for Question 2, the advertising brief question on the problem of chewing gum, with good reasons given for design choices.

There were some excellent answers to the scenario question. Many candidates were well prepared and justified decisions fully.

Paper 2: Unseen Analysis

There was an improved standard of response in the Unseen Analysis Paper. Some candidates' and centres' performances were very good, attaining high marks.

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

In categories, questions on 'purpose' and 'genre' were answered fully in many cases.

Many candidates used textual reference effectively.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1

In Section 1, Media Analysis, weaker responses did not refer closely to the text where this was specified in the question.

Institutional factors and their effect on the text appeared to be unfamiliar to some candidates, who could not describe the effect of a specific institutional factor on the text they had studied.

In Section 2, Media Production, Question 1 (e) was worth 16 marks and asked about the use of codes in the product that was planned and made. Weaker answers gave little detail when answering the question on how specific codes were used in the group production. Some candidates could not explain the reason behind specific production choices.

As in previous years, in the production Question 1, when candidates were asked to write about how the group dealt with constraints when planning and making their product, weaker 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 into account when analysing the brief from the outset or how they were satisfactorily dealt with during the production process.

In the advertising brief and the scenario questions, the candidates who gave inadequate answers did not justify choices in much detail or the answers were incomplete, suggesting a lack of time for this. In the advertising brief and scenario questions, candidates who made quite detailed sketches did not always justify choices in detail. More time spent on justifications would have improved the answer and the mark.

Paper 2: Unseen Analysis

It was widely commented by Markers that candidates did not do well answering unseen analysis questions on the medium of the text. This question continues to elude candidates. 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. This is a recurring issue. Therefore, asking a question on the 'medium' of an unseen text should perhaps be considered inadvisable.

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

As in previous years, the following terms in unseen analysis questions (from the Question 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

General

Paper 1

Section 1: Media Analysis

Firstly, it may be necessary to familiarise candidates with how to use specific textual details when responding to Section 1, Media Analysis questions.

Secondly, how a text would appeal to more than one audience and the effect of audience factors on the media text should be taught.

Thirdly, the effect of institutional factors on the text should be taught.

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. 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. How the specific target audiences for the product were taken into account should also be known.

In Question 2, advertising brief, and Question 3, scenario, candidates who can justify their decisions gain the highest marks. A focus on how to justify choices/decisions in these would benefit candidates. Some candidates may be spending too much time making detailed sketches and therefore running out of time for the justification of their choices. This applies particularly where candidates sketch posters. Allocating time appropriately in these cases may mean drawing a basic but clear sketch with more justification rather than giving few justifications but drawing a very detailed and multi-coloured poster design or storyboard.

Paper 2: Unseen Analysis

The Question Bank should be the exclusive source for the instrument of assessment for Unseen Analysis at Intermediate 1.

Information provided on the flyleaf should be carefully completed.

The [Intermediate 1 Unseen Analysis Question Item Bank](#) can be found at: www.sqa.org.uk > Qualifications > NQ > Subjects > Media Studies > Intermediate 1 under the Guidance documents tab.

There is an imbalance in the quality of response 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. It is strongly recommended that questions on the medium of the text be avoided in unseen analysis.

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'.

There must be a minimum of eight marks allocated to both categories and eight marks allocated to language questions in the instrument of assessment.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	528
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	617
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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 100				
A	16.4%	16.4%	101	66
B	19.8%	36.1%	122	55
C	23.7%	59.8%	146	45
D	9.4%	69.2%	58	40
No award	30.8%	100.0%	190	-

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.