

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Media Studies

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Media Studies – Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	549
---------------------------	-----

Number of entries in 2004	579
---------------------------	-----

General comments re entry numbers

While the number has risen when compared with the previous year part of this could be accounted for by the drop in Higher presentations.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

More A and Upper A passes than previously.

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Overall A – C pass rate down by 5.7% - very poor achievement at end of cohort. Presentation level was wrong in many cases and many candidates appeared to be ill-prepared for the examination at this level.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Maximum mark: 50

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	9.3	9.3	54	34
B	14.0	23.3	81	28
C	18.1	41.4	105	23
D	11.4	52.8	66	20
No award	47.2	100.0	273	
			579	

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The grade boundaries for Upper A, Lower A and B were lowered slightly compared to the previous year because some of the questions proved somewhat inaccessible for all but the very able candidates.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

While some candidates did very well this year and had clearly been well prepared for the exam all Markers commented on the fact that far too many candidates were either ill-prepared or were being entered at the wrong level.

All too often the exam revealed a lack of specific media knowledge at this level and a very non-media specific approach to the exam. There were also too many learned responses for the essays in Section 1, Part B, and Section 2 which almost inevitably became self-penalising for the candidates involved.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Most candidates did well in the Analysis Section, Part A while most Markers commented on the fact that there was a clear distinction between centres which prepared their candidates well and those that did not.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

In the Analysis Section, Part A, most candidates seemed to have no idea how to answer (e), the anchorage question while many had problems understanding technical and/or cultural codes as asked for in (c) and (d). This is particularly worrying as these terms are at the heart of the Language Outcome.

In the rest of the examination paper too many candidates are still trying to fit pre-learnt responses to completely inappropriate questions. This is true not only of the Analysis Section, Part B, but also of Question 3 of the Production Section.

The Production Section was, overall, the part of the paper least well done. All too often the creative Questions 1 and 2 were tackled from a viewer's perspective rather than from a production viewpoint and contained little or no justification for choices and decisions.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

There should now be enough exemplars of candidates' answers in the public domain for centres to familiarise themselves with what is expected in response to specific types of questions. Centres should then ensure that candidates know how to use the media knowledge they have amassed when answering these questions. This is of particular importance in the Production Section where too many candidates do not seem to know how to answer the questions.

Centres should make candidates aware that it is very important to answer the question chosen. It is an assessment objective of the examination that the candidate displays transferable skills of analysis and of knowledge and understanding of production processes. The external assessment is not simply a test of learned knowledge. Therefore, learned responses that do not match the chosen questions will not help them achieve a pass in the Analysis Section. Also the point of the questions in the Production Section is that candidates display the knowledge and understanding that they gained in the Production Unit. Therefore responses that simply describe the production process (in the reflective questions) will not enable candidates to achieve a pass. Candidates should also be made aware that they should not spend too much time in the Production Section on drawing/storyboarding at the expense of justifying the choices they have made.

Centres should make candidates aware that it is the application to texts of the key aspects that is being looked for in the Analysis Section. Candidates who simply display knowledge of the theory of, say, narrative codes, will not achieve a pass unless these codes are applied to a specific text or texts, as required by the question. In the Production Section it is the knowledge and understanding of production processes that is being examined, in both the reflective and creative questions.