

## Principal Assessor Report 2003

**Assessment Panel:**

**Media Studies**

**Qualification area**

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

**Media Studies (Intermediate 2)**

### **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	531
<b>Pre appeal</b>	458

<b>Number of entries in 2003</b>	607
<b>Pre appeal</b>	549

### **General comments re entry numbers**

At Pre-appeal stage the number had risen by 91 over the previous year.

## Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

### Maximum mark 50

#### Minimum mark required for:

Upper A	42
A	35
B	29
C	23

### 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 syllabuses evolve and change

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The grade boundaries for C and B were slightly lowered in 2003 over previous years, because some of the questions proved somewhat inaccessible for all but the very able candidates.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

In general terms, candidates did better in the Analysis Section than the Production Section of the question paper. In their responses to the creative Questions, 2 and 3, candidates are still inclined to delineate their ideal, completed text, rather than demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the production processes, Which all the questions in the Production Section seek to elicit. For Question 1 of the Production Section, there were too many learned responses which dealt with last years' question, rather than an **evaluation** of the production process which is what the question required.

Centres must stress to candidates the necessity to answer the question they have chosen; the examination is not a memory test of learned responses, but a test of knowledge and understanding which is demonstrated by the spontaneous application of the tools of textual analysis and by imagining or reflecting on the production process.

Markers have also observed that there are still too many candidates being inappropriately presented. Too many of the candidates, they felt, should have been presented for Intermediate 1. At present, bi-level teaching is not possible between Intermediates 1 and 2.

No marker reported that candidates seemed to have been disadvantaged by the correction notice.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Those that completed this section of the Markers' Report said that the Analysis Section, particularly Part A, was done best. Some markers reported that there was a clear distinction between centres which prepared their students well and those that did not.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Throughout the paper, candidates had difficulty if they reproduced prepared responses, instead of answering the question as asked. Some candidates are inclined to 'top-and-tail' their answers in response to the wording of the question, but the main part of the answer strays away from the point because it is fundamentally a learned response to the wording of a different question, recognisably from a past paper.

The Production Section was done least well. This is because candidates do not seem to understand that the questions test the knowledge and understanding of production processes gained during the Production Unit.

In the creative Questions 2 and 3 candidates continue to devise texts which are 'ideal', rather than showing that they understand the problems (and opportunities) associated with media production. Both of the creative questions favoured those who had studied the moving image in the Production Unit. Candidates who tackled Section 2, Question 2, found themselves describing the soap opera itself rather than the title sequence as required.

Responses to the reflective Question Section 2, Question 1, were disappointing because candidates ignored the fact that they were asked to **evaluate** the production **process**. There was little evaluation, mostly description, and where there was evaluation, it was of the planning process – as in the 2002 paper. Many candidates had learned responses to the reflective questions of even earlier years which had very little to do with the question as set.

Many candidates waste too much time on drawing/storyboarding and not enough justifying their choices. It seems also that candidates spent too much time on the Analysis Section, leaving themselves insufficient time for Section 2.

The Analysis Section of the question paper was done much better than the Production Section, but candidates have to remember to answer all parts of the question. This year there was evidence that candidates had been better taught the analytical concepts of Media Studies than in previous years, though several markers noted much confusion in the minds of candidates about the difference between technical and cultural codes.

Some candidates who tackled Section 1 Part B Question 3, did not refer to a **non-fiction** text. Candidates would be advised to try to define what they understand by non-fiction (or indeed fiction) when they begin to tackle such a question, instead of simply asserting that the text they use is suitable. The markers are then able to gauge the level of understanding of the candidate. This question, however, was not a popular choice.

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

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.