

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Media Studies

Qualification area

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

**Media Studies
Higher Level**

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	827
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	814
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

There was a slight decrease in entries at Higher Level this year. At the same time, there was an increase in numbers at Intermediate 2 and given an overall improvement in the Higher pass rate, this suggests that more candidates are being entered at the most appropriate level for them.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 100	-	-	-	-
A	16.8	16.8	137	70
B	19.9	36.7	162	58
C	22.9	59.6	186	47
D	10.4	70.0	85	41
No award	30.0	100.0	244	-

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 any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

The examination structure was changed as a result of the NQ Review of Media Studies
To ensure overall standards and the level of demand was maintained from the old arrangements to the new, the same Grade Boundary was set in 2005 as in 2004 as this was deemed appropriate.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

A significant number of candidates used Categories or Language as one of their three main key aspects in the Media Analysis section of the final exam. It is stressed to centres that this section requires candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of at least three key aspects from Narrative, Representation, Audience and Institutions. Any references to Categories or Languages are normally only credited if they are *in support of* these other key aspects, not as stand-alone aspects themselves. The reverse of this is in Unseen Analysis, where candidates are marked on their analysis of Categories and Language, and other key aspects are normally only credited if they are clearly used in support of these two.

This is unchanged from previous years. It differs from the internal assessment of analysis units where the requirement to analyse at least one context-based and two text-based key aspects may mean that to pass an internal unit assessment, candidates can in theory analyse either Audience or Institution and any other two key aspects in relation to their fiction or non-fiction text.

Notwithstanding this problem, markers felt that there was an improvement in the standard of responses, and that the majority of candidates had been entered at the appropriate level and well prepared for the exam.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Unseen Analysis

Most candidates are confident with the Unseen Analysis task, transferring their analytical skills well to an unseen text. Candidates who limited their analysis mainly to Categories and Language, and within this clearly linked references made to other key aspects did well, as did those who applied their knowledge in detail to the text, giving clear examples or analysis of how categories and language were used or evident in the text.

Exam: Analysis

In Analysis, markers noted a general improvement in the quality of responses. Candidates performed well when they showed a detailed knowledge of a text and how key aspects integrated and applied to it. Those who were able to transfer their convincing knowledge and understanding of the media, concepts and texts to previously unforeseen questions produced answers of the highest standards.

Exam: Production

Successful reflective answers clearly indicated an understanding the relationship between key aspects and their own planning and production processes, and referred in detail to their texts, planning and production, and key aspect concepts or considerations. Some showed considerable insight. Successful creative answers were clearly written from a production viewpoint and justified all decisions made. There were some very convincing and well justified ideas.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Candidates had difficulty accessing the available marks when their response was characterised by any of the following:

Unseen Analysis

- description or explanation rather than adequate analysis in relation to either Categories or Language
- reproducing pre-existing knowledge about the genre/medium being analysed without applying this specifically to the text given for assessment

Exam: Analysis

- reference to fewer than three key aspects from Narrative, Representation, Audience and Institution
- little or no attempt to transfer knowledge and understanding of media analysis to answer the exam-specific question but, rather, simply reproducing a learned response
- a lack of specific textual reference to justify analysis

Exam: Production

- reflective questions – not covering the requirements of the question; producing a learned response; reproducing a production diary or unit evaluation; a description of the product made or a general grumble about the lack of facilities, budget, absence etc without discussing the implications of these constraints for the production decisions made
- creative questions – not covering all the requirements of the question; not justifying decision made; indicating a ‘wish list’ of textual elements that shows only a very limited understanding of production practices and processes.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Guidance based on 2005 performance

Centres are reminded that although the Structure of internal assessment for analysis has changed, the focus of the external assessment has not:

External Component	Focus
Unseen Analysis	both Categories and Language
Exam: Analysis	at least 3 from Narrative, Representation, Audience and Institution
Production	reflection on or application of production knowledge and experience

Additional guidance on external assessment, including the format and administration of the Unseen Analysis Folio, is given in the updated Course Assessment Pack for Higher published online at www.sqa.org.uk.

Unseen Analysis

Centres should ensure that the text selected is appropriate in its complexity for a Higher-level analysis and limited to around 5 minutes of time-based material or 1 page of print-based material. In general, where candidates are given a text which is too long, they tend to describe rather than analyse, to their disadvantage. The text or extract selected should be from a medium and genre that has been studied in class but should not be a title previously studied.

As each full or partially full envelope of scripts is sent to a different marker, centres should ensure that there is a copy of the text in each envelope, and that all copies are readable/audible/viewable. Following technical difficulties encountered by markers with texts submitted via links to websites, on DVD, CD-ROM, MP3 or other electronic media, centres using such media must also include a video-tape, audio-tape or print back-up copy as appropriate.

Candidates should be advised of the following

- *Both Categories and Language* must be adequately analysed in order to achieve a pass. Some candidates concentrate on one at the expense of the other. Categories, in particular, are often simply described without analysis.
- Knowledge about the categories and language of the genre must be applied to the text specific to the assessment. It is an assessment objective of Unseen Analysis that candidates spontaneously apply the tools of media analysis in a relatively unforeseen situation. Candidates are unlikely to achieve a pass if they simply reproduce learned information about the genre without specific analysis of the way the relevant categories and language are evident or used in the text selected for assessment.
- The Unseen Analysis folio examines the candidates' abilities to analyse a text not previously seen in terms of Categories and Language. It is possible to achieve the highest marks by referring only to these two key aspects. Naturally, candidates may wish to refer to other relevant key aspects. However, to gain credit for doing so, any such references must be clearly relevant to Categories or Language and linked or contextualised as so in the response. Candidates may disadvantage themselves where they try to analyse as many key aspects as possible rather than limit themselves mainly to Categories and Language.
- Responses need not to be written in an essay format, and some candidates may find it helpful to use sub-headings in their analysis.

Exam: Analysis Section

Candidates should be advised of the following

- The Analysis Section examines the candidates' abilities to demonstrate their knowledge and

understanding of at least three of the key aspects from Narrative, Representation, Audience and Institutions. Naturally, candidates may wish to refer to other relevant key aspects. However, to gain credit for doing so, any such references must clearly support the main three they are using. Categories and Language must not be used as stand-alone key aspects in this section.

- Analysis of key aspects must be clearly justified by specific references to a text the candidate has previously studied.
- Candidates must make an attempt to answer the question chosen. It is an assessment objective that the candidate displays transferable skills of analysis and so the reproduction of a learned response that does not match the question will not help them access the available marks.

Exam: Production Section

Candidates should be advised of the following

- Candidates should ensure that they prepare as fully for this section as for the analysis section and unseen analysis folio, as it is marked as rigorously, against the same level of standards.
- In reflective questions, candidates are asked a question which relates to the relationship between planning and production processes, key aspects and the final product. Candidates should be prepared to discuss such things as their production experience, knowledge, constraints and opportunities and the relationship between these and the active planning and production of their text. References could be made to the final product, to the use of production practices and key aspects and to other relevant production matters. There should be a sense of an active construction of a text according to a number of factors, not simply of the realisation (or otherwise) of ideas. For example, a description of the final product will not allow candidates to access the available marks successfully, whereas a detailed reference to the product in terms of how and why it was actively constructed in a particular way is likely to be better rewarded by markers. A retelling of production day-by-day will not gain much credit, and neither will a list of what went wrong or how few facilities were available! On the other hand, a discussion of the opportunities and constraints relevant to the institution or production and the ways in which these impacted on decisions about planning, production and/or the final form the text would take is more appropriate to Higher. A reproduction of the unit evaluation will not gain a pass, but some evaluation of, say, how the language and representation were used to achieve a particular purpose or attract a specific audience, or of how narrative was used to engage an audience, aid their understanding or meet their expectations is far more appropriate. It should be stressed that these are simply examples and not applicable to all questions; candidates should always follow the requirements of particular questions and make every effort to answer the question. They should not reproduce learned responses.
- In creative questions, candidates are asked to indicate how they would construct a text in response to a given brief or narrative. Candidates should ensure that they include all of the elements asked for in the task. Each element need not have equal weighting and is dependent on the brief given, but it is crucial that candidates justify their decisions relating to each part of the task. For example, medium might be justified in terms of its consumption by particular audiences, or its characteristics and how these relate to the audience/product/storyline etc. Target audiences should be clearly indicated and justified. Problems and solutions should show knowledge of production practices and issues. There should not simply be a 'wish-list' of shots, for example, but rather a justification of how specific technical and cultural codes, narrative etc would be used in the construction of a text, according to the opportunities in the brief or narrative, or meanings and connotations that the candidate would wish to convey, or the target audience, and so on. Again, these are only examples. Candidates would not be expected to cover everything suggested, and given the wide range of potential productions that candidates might indicate, it is impossible to be specific. However, the main point is that candidates are being tested on their knowledge and understanding of production and production processes. Candidates are better able to access the available marks when they make and justify decisions from a production viewpoint, not a consumer one.