# Course report 2019

| Subject | Media |
| --- | --- |
| Level | National 5 |

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

# Section 1: comments on the assessment

**Question paper**

The question paper is worth 60 marks. 50 marks are available for answering questions on previously-taught media content. 10 marks are available for applying knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of media literacy to a film poster, magazine front cover or print advertisement.

The question paper performed as intended. The question paper allowed candidates to demonstrate sound knowledge of the key aspects of media.

Most candidates were prepared with a selection of texts for different question types, and avoided repetition in different questions.

It is the second year of the additional 10-mark 'Analysis of a Media Text' section in the question paper, and it seems to be functioning well, with most candidates attempting the question and displaying good skills of analysis.

**Assignment**

The assignment is worth 60 marks and has two sections. Section 1: planning is worth 25 marks and section 2: development is worth 35 marks.

The assignment performed as expected.

It is evident that most candidates understand what is required. Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the additional 10 marks for development, and structured their responses into a) and b) answers, as directed by the coursework assessment task.

As in previous years, there were some original, entertaining and creative assignments (particularly in film and storyboards) where candidates showed considerable technical expertise. Where candidates focused their efforts appropriately on their written responses as opposed to the 'finish' of the media content, high marks were gained.

It was clear that a very high number of candidates had engaged well with the process, whether working individually or in groups.

# Section 2: comments on candidate performance

## Areas that candidates performed well in

### Question paper

Many candidates approached the question paper methodically and showed considerable knowledge. Varied and appropriate content had been taught, and candidates made good choices in matching this to the questions.

Most candidates completed the paper, and some wrote a substantial amount for every question.

Candidates tended to achieve higher marks in questions which asked them to describe, rather than explain.

Candidates achieved high marks in different ways: whether for detailed knowledge shown in many individual points, or by developing points they had made.

Question 3 (Narrative) was straightforward, and many candidates achieved high marks. Most candidates chose to discuss the narrative theories of Tzvetan Todorov, and were able to segment a film into stages. Joseph Campbell's theory of 'The Hero's Journey' was also popular, as was Vladimir Propp's analysis of character roles. Candidates were able to apply these theories to their chosen texts.

There were some very good answers on 'promotion' (question 5), with a variety of approaches, from the promotion of ideologies to products.

The 'Analysis of a Media Text' section was dealt with successfully by most candidates. The film poster (*Christopher Robin*) was by far the most popular option, and candidates showed a very good understanding of the nostalgic elements depicted, and could relate this to purpose and audience. This different type of task allowed candidates to display their analysis skills even when they might not have performed very well in section 1.

### Assignment

As in previous years, most candidates had negotiated stimulating, individualised briefs with their teacher or lecturer. Candidates who followed a clear structure and approached the questions in a systematic manner scored well.

Generally, the responses from candidates were appropriate for the assessment task and set out in an appropriate format. There were fewer examples than in previous years of candidate work being submitted in the wrong format or candidates responding to the wrong questions.

### Section 1: planning

In particular, candidates achieved better marks in the planning section than in the development section. It was clear where candidates had written up their submission at the time of their research, and by doing this, higher marks were gained.

Many candidates had conducted relevant, targeted research, and could explain the relationship between the research findings and the planning decisions made. Some centres had designed a template for this with a section for the research, followed by a section for the planning decision. This meant that the candidates were likely to make the connections required.

Candidates often gained high marks in question 1 (Audience) with candidates showing a clear understanding of how research into audience would affect the planning of a media product.

Candidates often gained high marks in question 4 (First key aspect) with candidates showing how research into a key aspect affected the planning of their media product. Most chose to discuss language or representation.

**Section 2: development**

The standard of many National 5 media products was excellent, in particular films and storyboards. Simple briefs (for example films of only two-minute duration, or a single page advertisement) worked well, and left time for writing up afterwards.

Increasingly, high quality software was used for trailers or films. Many candidates achieved high marks even if their products were not highly-finished, because their creative intentions were clear, and backed up by their written submission.

Assignments which allowed candidates to use their imagination worked well, whether in producing storyboards, posters or moving image texts. Short films made on mobile phones, and hand drawn posters showed how basic equipment could be successful, if candidates could explain the impact or connotations they intended.

This is the second year of the additional 10 marks in the development section, and candidates were better prepared for it. The requirement to evaluate their content worked well for most candidates and it was straightforward to explain which improvements could be made. This approach proved to work well, even for storyboards where the product hadn't been made.

# Areas that candidates found demanding

## Question paper

Question 1: The question on language features requires an answer which would typically discuss framing, lighting, editing, sound, font, layout, mise-en-scène, colour and so on, in relation to media content. Discussing features of language in a non-media specific way meant candidates were unable to gain marks, as this approach did not demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding. Some candidates only discussed dialogue, as if they were discussing a play. SQA has issued clear guidelines on language as a key aspect of Media in the Course Specification, Understanding Standards materials and the 2017 and 2018 Course Reports.

Question 3b was not particularly well done, with many candidates unable to explain the purpose of the narrative structures, codes or conventions that they had described in question 3a.

Question 5: Some candidates clearly did not understand the meaning of 'promotion' and discussed the content of film(s) in an irrelevant way. This is an established media term, and is mandatory content, as outlined in the Course Specification. This question was not always attempted by candidates.

Occasionally there was some repetition between the answers for question 1 and question 5 with some candidates using detail on question 1 (language to create meaning) again in question 5 (promotion of ideas). The same media examples could have been used if applied to the relevant question with different comments.

## Assignment

When candidates had been given a product to design and advertise, such as a gadget, they occasionally spent too much time designing and naming this, rather than concentrating on the advertisement of it in a media text. In addition, sometimes they evaluated the product, rather than their media text(s).

Group tasks without clearly defined roles for all candidates didn't allow them to demonstrate their input, and led to unfocused responses.

## Section 1: planning

In the planning section not all candidates defined relevant research, connected to specific plans. As in previous years, in question 1 (audience), some candidates discussed research into content, rather than research into audience. For example, some discussed genre conventions or narrative or stereotyping in detail, and then made simplistic statements about who they thought might like this. This question requires them to consider their target audience and conduct focused research.

In question 3 (external controls) some candidates mentioned irrelevant institutional factors in planning. For example, the American Humane Society's rules pertaining to the use of animals in film, when the candidate has stated they are making a poster in the UK.

There wasn't always a clear indication of which key aspects they were responding to in questions 4 and 5, and sometimes only one key aspect was referenced.

## Section 2: development

Some candidates didn't structure their responses as a) and b), as exemplified in the Coursework Assessment Task and Understanding Standards materials. This meant that evaluation (as required by the b) part) was implicit and more difficult to reward or missing completely.

Not all candidates made their individual input into a group production clear enough.

As in previous years, the quality of answers suffered as candidates worked through the five development questions. This could be seen in declining marks. Some candidates had produced excellent media texts, but had not written about them in sufficient detail.

There was also a large number of candidates who made evaluative comments on the usefulness of storyboarding software when they should have been evaluating the content of the storyboard.

# Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Centres new to the course should ensure knowledgeable staff are delivering the qualification, and seek support, training and development where appropriate. Support materials include Understanding Standards material, webinars and the Course Support Notes. There is also a Subject Implementation Manager for media who can carry out centre development visits.

## Question paper

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the course specification to ensure that all mandatory course content has been covered. For example, not understanding the key aspect of 'language' meant some very good candidates lost a considerable number of marks.

It was clear that most teachers and lecturers had carefully selected media content which was stimulating, age-appropriate and varied. However, teachers and lecturers are always advised to prepare their candidates with a selection of texts to choose from as some questions are more suited to certain types of media content.

The role of media should be taught with different types of media content which fulfil different purposes, ie those that entertain, educate and/or inform. Candidate preferences should be considered, although there is also merit in learning about media content they would not usually experience. Texts with simple narrative structures work well, as complex narratives can be hard to deconstruct.

Candidates should be taught the clear difference between questions which ask them to describe, and those that ask them to explain. 'Explain' questions require candidates to give detailed textual exemplification that shows cause and effect.

Different genres from different time periods should be covered when preparing for the 'Analysis of a Media Text' section.

## Assignment

Teachers and lecturers should consider candidate preferences when creating the brief, to encourage engagement. However, giving too much freedom can lead to candidates not prioritising tasks. Asking candidates to design a media product such as a new toy, and then to create a media text to advertise it, can result in candidates spending too long on creating a consumer product, rather than the media content. In addition, it must be made clear to candidates that it is the media product they are researching, planning and developing, not the consumer product.

It is crucial that candidates write up their notes on planning as they work through the assignment rather than tackling this at the end. If they do this, they will demonstrate full understanding of how research into audience, internal and external institutional factors and key aspects has influenced their plans, rather than simply reverting to describing the media content they produced.

Care should be taken with group productions to ensure individualised work, particularly with research in the planning section. Candidates should have a clear idea of their role.

Successful assignments tend to have a clear brief (for example, a 12-panel storyboard for a trailer) with some institutional constraints relevant to a school production or professional context. This gives candidates a good deal of scope to be creative within certain parameters.

In the development section, candidates tend to do well when their five chosen examples allow them to draw on a good range of codes. For example, a storyboard that includes lighting, colour, shot type, costume etc, or a sequence of several shots from a film.

# Grade boundary and statistical information:

## Statistical information: update on courses

| Number of resulted entries in 2018 | 1007 |
|---|---|

| Number of resulted entries in 2019 | 972 |
|---|---|

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of course awards | Percentage | Cumulative % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maximum mark | | | | |
| A | 29.9% | 29.9% | 291 | 84 |
| B | 18.9% | 48.9% | 184 | 72 |
| C | 17.1% | 65.9% | 166 | 60 |
| D | 17.4% | 83.3% | 169 | 48 |
| No award | 16.7% | - | 162 | - |

# General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
♦ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.