



Course report 2022

Subject	Media
Level	Higher

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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	1105
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	28.5	Cumulative percentage	28.5	Number of candidates	315	Minimum mark required	66
B	Percentage	28.7	Cumulative percentage	57.2	Number of candidates	315	Minimum mark required	57
C	Percentage	21.2	Cumulative percentage	78.4	Number of candidates	235	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	11.7	Cumulative percentage	90.1	Number of candidates	130	Minimum mark required	39
No award	Percentage	9.9	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	110	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1 — Analysis of media content

Question paper 1, with the optionality introduced as part of the modifications to assessment for session 2021–22, performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated that the paper was positively received by centres and was fair and accessible for candidates. The majority of candidates understood what was required and completed both sections in the allocated time. The amendment to the paper's duration, introduced after 2019, functioned appropriately.

A slightly higher number of candidates chose to respond to question 2 than question 1 in section 1, but both questions performed as expected.

Question paper 2 — The role of media

This question paper performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated that the paper was positively received by centres and was fair and accessible for candidates. The majority of candidates understood what was required and completed the paper in the allocated time.

Assignment

The assignment with modifications for session 2021–22 performed as expected, with candidates achieving marks across all parts of the task.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1 — Analysis of media content

In section 1, most candidates made an appropriate selection for the texts they had studied.

In both question 1 and question 2, candidates tended to perform better in part (a), where they were focusing their discussion on just one key aspect. Successful candidates focused on specific examples of society factors relevant to their chosen media content for question 1, or on specific examples of representations from media content in question 2. In both questions, successful candidates discussed specific examples from media content, demonstrating their understanding of the concepts through their discussion. In part (b), successful candidates selected examples of the relevant key aspects that they analysed in relation to the concept(s) already discussed in part (a).

For both parts (a) and (b), high-scoring candidates tended to select two or three concepts to discuss in depth and detail, providing clear exemplification from media content to back up their points, and commenting on the examples given, as relevant to the task. For part (b) these candidates made comments on the relationship between the concepts they were focusing on, analysing the relationship between content and context, as relevant to the task.

Most successful candidates wrote on one media text for section 1, and in almost all cases they wrote on moving image. They had studied a range of texts including film and TV, both fiction and non-fiction. Some candidates successfully wrote on more than one text in their response.

In section 2, the vast majority of candidates wrote about the film posters. Successful candidates selected clear examples of how key aspects had been used in the posters and went on to analyse how and why this had been done. Most candidates compared the similarities and/or differences between the posters in relation to some of the examples they had chosen to analyse. Overall, candidates seemed to find the texts rich in terms of the examples they were able to select from in their analysis.

Question paper 2 — The role of media

Most candidates responded appropriately to the task, making points about how media content they had studied had been used to achieve the specific purposes of profit, promotion, and/or public service. The most successful candidates made points that either debated the different purposes of the texts they had studied or constructed a line of argument or opinion in response to the task. Other candidates made points of information about the purposes of one or more text(s) and brought these together to construct at least one point of discussion.

Some candidates produced high-quality, well-structured responses that showed a strong understanding of the task and of the media texts they had studied. High-scoring candidates tended to focus on a small number of texts (typically two or three). They used these texts to discuss the sampled concept of purpose, showing a sophisticated understanding of why the

media texts had been made and commenting on specific exemplification from the media content being discussed to exemplify their points.

Most candidates focused on a range of texts, with many candidates choosing either shorter texts such as adverts or music videos, or longer texts such as documentaries.

Assignment

Many candidates produced high-quality and well-structured assignments that indicated understanding of the task and familiarity with marking standards and guidance. Candidates tended to perform well when they had written up their responses to section 1 at the same time as carrying out the required research and planning. Candidates who then performed well in section 2 showed clear understanding of the process of making media content, reflecting on what they had done, and evaluating its effectiveness.

Clearly laid-out and labelled responses, structured with subheadings and bullet points or clearly separated paragraphs helped candidates to access the full range of marks, particularly in section 1.

Most candidates performed well in section 1. These candidates clearly indicated their planning decisions and justified these in terms of the requirements of tasks, relating their plans to their research findings or to achieving their creative intentions.

In section 2, high-scoring candidates tended to discuss what they had done in detail and elaborated on the intentions behind their actions, making detailed points of evaluation throughout their discussion.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1 — Analysis of media content

For question 1, a few candidates wrote about society factors that were not relevant to the media content they had studied. This had an impact on the marks they were able to access for both parts (a) and (b). In most of these cases, the candidates wrote about more than one society factor, which meant they had usually included some relevant points to gain some marks.

For question 2, a few candidates attempted, incorrectly, to discuss society factors for part (b) rather than audience and/or institutions. This appeared to be because they felt most confident analysing representations in relation to society factors. This had an impact on their ability to access the marks available for part (b). Candidates must be prepared to integrate any of the three contexts with the content-based key aspect sampled in question 2(a) and must respond to the task in the question paper.

Across question 1 and question 2, a few candidates did not integrate their discussion of the sampled key aspect from part (a) in their discussion of the key aspects in part (b). This meant they were not able to achieve more than 4 marks for part (b).

Some candidates who chose to write on more than one text in section 1, found this approach challenging and it led to a less coherent response than those who wrote on just one text.

Where this approach led to some difficulties, it had a more significant impact for part (b) in both questions.

Some candidates attempted to reference both texts in each point they made for question 3. This took the form of making a point about one text, then linking this to a similar point about the other text. This resulted in candidates making a range of points in lesser detail rather than making developed points of analysis, which they could more easily do in response to a single text. This also meant the candidates were not able to develop their discussion of the two texts together in sufficient depth and limited their mark to a maximum of 6. For some candidates, referring to both texts in every paragraph led to their points being too thin. These candidates were only able to demonstrate an explanation rather than analysis, which limited their mark to 4 out of 10.

Question paper 2 — The role of media

Some candidates did not fully respond to the concept sampled in the task (achieving a purpose). Instead, they discussed various roles of the media in a general way in relation to the media content they had studied. A few of these candidates appeared to reproduce an essay they had previously learned, discussing a concept that was not sampled in the question paper. Others appeared to share all that they had learned in relation to all of the possible concepts that could have been sampled, rather than responding to the task in the question paper.

Some less successful candidates focused on the detail of specific examples of the media texts they had studied, giving lengthy descriptions with no comment on how these examples related to the points they were making in response to the task. Others only made broad or sparse references to media texts, or the examples they gave did not develop or support the points they were making.

Assignment

Where candidates wrote up their responses to section 1 after making their media content, this tended to make the connections between research and planning less clear and made it harder for them to access marks. A few candidates wrote in the past tense, which impeded them when they attempted to discuss their plans because they had clearly already carried out their ideas and were writing at a point where they could no longer fully recall the justifications for their decisions.

For section 2, some candidates wrote an account of what happened or what they had done, similar to a production diary or an analysis of their film, without much reflection or evaluation of how well they had done. This approach made it harder for them to access the higher mark bands, which require candidates to take an evaluative stance throughout their responses.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1 — Analysis of media content

For questions 1 and 2, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to write separate responses for parts (a) and (b) as this focuses responses on addressing what is required by each part of the task. Teachers and lecturers should spend time in class going over how the different contexts and key aspects of content integrate with each other, so that candidates are comfortable analysing these connections in response to the tasks in the question paper. Exemplification of this approach is available on SQA's Understanding Standards website.

Teachers and lecturers should also ensure candidates are comfortable with all the terminology that might feature in the question paper. Candidates should be able to apply these concepts to the text(s) they have studied.

Most centres focus on feature-length films, either fiction or non-fiction, for this section, although some centres use TV (either single episodes or a season from a TV series). This type of media content is appropriate for this paper as it offers candidates a wealth of material from which to draw exemplification. (The Higher Media Course Specification has more detail on the types of texts that would be appropriate for the various sections of the course assessment.) Teachers and lecturers should spend time with candidates exploring how best to select and use evidence from the text(s) studied in their analysis. They should ensure candidates have a firm understanding of all seven concepts that could be sampled in the question paper. They should also support candidates to develop the required analysis skills, which will enable them to use specific and detailed evidence from the text(s) they studied in order to give a meaningful response to the question paper task.

For question 3, candidates should select the pair of texts that best fits with the type of text they have studied during the course. To prepare for the question paper, candidates should spend time analysing a diverse range of texts, covering different genres, eras, and styles. There should be an emphasis in class on discussing a pair of texts together, focusing on picking out similarities and differences between the texts and analysing these to the required depth.

Candidates should practise making developed points of analysis of a combination of codes (which could be selected from one of the texts), and then further developing this or selecting a new point of analysis for a developed comparison between the pair of texts. Candidates should not focus on isolated codes; they should look at how the codes work together to create meaning.

Question paper 2 — The role of media

Teachers and lecturers should teach candidates to respond to the specific task in the question paper. In a single essay-style response candidates should develop a line of argument or opinion, make detailed points of information to back up their argument, and provide specific and detailed evidence from texts they have studied to back up the points they make. They should think about how to draw one or more conclusions in relation to the task and the evidence they have selected.

Candidates must understand the importance of responding to the question paper task instead of using a pre-prepared essay. Marks are awarded for their ability to discuss the question stem.

Studying a selection of texts in class will allow candidates to select from a range of evidence and enable them to respond to the specifics of the task set in the question paper. The texts should give candidates a range of evidence that will allow them to discuss different sides of an argument in relation to any of the three roles of media that could be sampled. Most successful candidates tend to study a range of shorter texts such as adverts or music videos, or a series of short documentaries. By studying a range of shorter texts, candidates can select evidence that is relevant to the task in the question paper and exemplify the points they make in their argument.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to reflect on how each of the texts they study might fit into the three roles of media, and the sub-concepts within each role. Teachers and lecturers should ensure that the range of texts studied in class will allow candidates to do this.

Candidates should spend time in class thinking about how to construct an argument within and across the different roles of media. For example, how the different purposes of profit, promotion, and public service might be achieved in the different texts studied; or how the same texts might intentionally or unintentionally influence attitudes and/or behaviour; or how those texts might be used to meet audience needs.

Assignment

It is essential that centres set a suitable brief for the assignment. The brief should provide candidates with some form of creative stimulus but should not restrict their ability to negotiate and/or make their own decisions. As in previous years, there was evidence this year of some briefs being too restrictive and not allowing candidates the creative freedom necessary for them to perform well.

The brief should take into account the technology available and any restrictions in centres that could have an impact. Good practice is to provide candidates with two or more possible stimuli and some room for negotiation around things such as form, medium, genre, target audience, and purpose. This gives candidates some parameters to work within but does not restrict their ability to make plans they can justify to access the full range of marks in section 1.

To give candidates a sufficient range of codes to discuss, the brief should specify that moving image texts should be no longer than 2 to 3 minutes, and that print posters should be part of a campaign of at least three posters. Candidates should make media content similar to the content they are studying in other areas of the course. For example, if they are studying film for the analysis paper they could make short films, or if they are analysing print ads for the role of the media paper or for the unseen task, then the brief could be for a print advertising campaign.

Candidates can work as part of a group to produce their media content, but clear parameters in terms of individual roles and responsibilities should be set from the outset. The written responses relating to planning, research, and evaluation should relate to the work the

individual candidate has carried out in relation to the areas of the group production they have taken responsibility for.

For section 1, candidates should complete the written responses on their plans and justifications as they go along. They do not need to complete them in the order given in the task document (although they should be submitted to SQA in this order), but they should record their plans and decisions, along with their justifications for these, as they work their way through the planning phase. Candidates should complete the written responses for this section before they create their media content. This gives them a logical progression into section 2, where they evaluate how effective their plans were when put into effect.

For section 2, candidates should understand that they must evaluate to access the full range of marks. This requires some discussion of intentions and/or processes, and then an evaluation of how effective or otherwise these were.

For 2(a), candidates should be focused on discussing specific opportunities and constraints relating to the institutional context they are working in, and specific tasks they carried out in their production role(s). They should then evaluate how effectively they worked with these opportunities and/or constraints, and what impact their actions, when carrying out their production role(s), had on the process and/or the finished content.

For 2(b), candidates should discuss specific examples of how they hoped to achieve their creative intentions for the finished piece of content and then evaluate, in detail, how effective the finished piece is in terms of their original intentions. In the discussion of their intentions, candidates should give details demonstrating how they intended to create meaning by using a range of technical and cultural codes, and what impact they intended to have on the audience when using these codes. They should then evaluate how effective they were in achieving these intentions in their finished product. It is the combination of detailed discussion of the meanings and/or impact the candidates hoped to create, along with the evaluation of how effective this actually was in the finished content that is being assessed.

In cases of moving image texts, it is good practice for centres to submit all candidate work on one disk or memory stick per packet, using a standard format that can be easily read by players (such as VLC or QuickTime). Centres should check that each text on the disk or memory stick can be played before submitting the work to SQA. Centres should ensure that a copy of the work for each candidate in a packet is enclosed in each envelope being submitted. In the case of print texts, centres should ensure that physical copies of the finished print product are provided for each candidate. These products should be a finished piece, printed out, and not hand drawings or sketches.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty 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 on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).