Course report 2022

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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	1100

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	42.8	Cumulative percentage	42.8	Number of candidates	470	Minimum mark required	84
B	Percentage	18.1	Cumulative percentage	60.9	Number of candidates	200	Minimum mark required	72
C	Percentage	14.1	Cumulative percentage	75.0	Number of candidates	155	Minimum mark required	60
D	Percentage	11.4	Cumulative percentage	86.4	Number of candidates	125	Minimum mark required	48
No award	Percentage	13.6	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	150	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

The question paper performed as intended with most candidates managing their time well and completing the paper.

The question paper allowed candidates to demonstrate sound knowledge of the key aspects of media, and there was evidence of careful preparation and guidance. The modifications to assessment for session 2021–22 and the revision support for learners clearly helped candidates. The revision support gave candidates advance notice of a number of key aspects that were going to be in the question paper.

Most candidates were prepared with a selection of texts for different question types and avoided repetition in different questions. It was clear that most centres had selected media content that was stimulating, age-appropriate, and varied.

Most candidates responded well in the analysis of a media text section, with many displaying good skills of analysis.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected.

It is evident that candidates understood what was required. The modifications to assessment for session 2021–22, which combined the research of internal and external controls and reduced the development section from five examples to four, appears to have helped candidates. For the development section, most candidates structured their responses into (a) and (b) answers, as directed by the Assignment 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.

It was clear that most candidates engaged well with the process, whether working individually or in groups.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Most candidates approached the question paper methodically and showed considerable knowledge. Centres had taught varied and appropriate content, 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 achieved high marks in different ways: whether for detailed knowledge shown in many individual points, or by developing points they had made.

Question 1 (narrative): was straightforward, and many candidates gained high marks. Most candidates chose to discuss the narrative theories of Tzvetan Todorov and were able to segment media content into stages. However, some candidates lost marks by only referencing the stages in the text without explaining what the stage involves or giving specific examples.

Joseph Campbell's theory of 'The Hero's Journey' was also popular, as was Vladimir Propp's analysis of character roles. Others also answered well on binary oppositions and enigma codes. Candidates were able to apply these theories to a wide selection of texts although mainstream film was the most popular choice.

Question 2 (audience): some candidates had clearly prepared answers on target audience and not audience reactions. They identified 'an audience' rather than 'an audience reaction'. This led to some irrelevant answers in 2(a), but with careful unpicking credit could be given in 2(b) where audience reactions might feature.

Question 3 (categories, tone): answers on tone were overall very good, and better than previous years. Many candidates chose to write about tones of sadness, humour, or tension and most managed to link this to technical and/or cultural codes.

Question 4 (representation, stereotypes): many candidates knew what a stereotype was, and many wrote about the representation of teenagers, femme fatales, and heroes or villains. However, some simply described the characters, rather explaining how they are used or challenged as required by the question.

Question 5 (meeting needs): this question was very open and gave candidates scope to discuss mainstream media and/or public service texts. Public service adverts were used extensively and worked well due to their clear messages and formats.

Question 6 (analysis of a media text) was dealt with successfully by most candidates. The film poster (*Moana*) was by far the most popular option, and many candidates showed a very good understanding of the adventurous elements depicted and could relate this to purpose and audience. However, some candidates made simplistic points about textual elements in the poster and did not fully analyse the main cover image. Explanations were sometimes quite thin, with limited direct connection to genre, representation or narrative.

There was over-reliance on writing about institutional factors like billing block or studio name, which meant candidates were making too many simplistic and repeated points.

The few candidates that answered on the magazine cover or advertisement options displayed sound knowledge of textual elements appropriate to the texts.

Assignment

The reduction of 10 marks in the planning section (by combining internal and external controls) and 10 marks in the development section (by only asking for four examples instead of five) was helpful, and most candidates completed the assignment.

As in previous years, most centres had negotiated stimulating, individualised briefs with their candidates that gave clear direction. The candidates that 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 were set out in an appropriate format. There seemed to be fewer centres than in previous years submitting candidate work in the wrong format or responding to the wrong questions.

Section 1: planning

It was clear that most candidates had written up their submission at the time of their research, and by doing this, they gained higher marks. Surveys and focus groups worked well for this section, with candidates showing a clear understanding of how research into audience would affect the planning of a media product.

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.

However, 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.

There were instances of content research in place of audience research — usually where candidates were using websites like IMDb to try to extrapolate audience opinions. Candidates who undertook surveys or focus groups tackled this question more successfully.

Section 2: development

As always, the standard of many National 5 media products was excellent, in particular films and storyboards. Simple briefs (for example films of only a 2-minute duration, or a single-page advertisement) worked well, and left time for writing up afterwards.

Assignments that 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.

However, some candidates did not structure their responses as (a) and (b), as exemplified in the Assignment Assessment Task. This meant that evaluation as required by part (b) was implicit and more difficult to reward or was missing completely.

Giving candidates a template to work from helped as it allowed them to organise their thinking (particularly with section 1: planning). Similar templates were used for the development section, though by notably fewer centres. Some candidates combined (a) and (b) in their answers, which tended to result in a lack of one of the areas being developed.

A few candidates failed to make their individual input into a group production clear enough. When candidates had been given a product to design and advertise, such as a gadget, they occasionally spent too much time designing and naming it, 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).

Another problematic area was candidates who made posters for films that already exist (using screenshots of moments from the film). This meant that, in the development section, they were limited in the marks they could achieve. For example, if they had not made decisions about representation, colour, lighting, and layout, they could not be given credit for it. This meant it was more like content research than development.

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.

Component 1: question paper

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the course specification to ensure that all mandatory course content has been covered.

As with previous years, it is paramount that candidates have a selection of texts to choose from in answering the questions. Some questions are more suited to certain types of media content. Teachers and lecturers should teach the role of media with different types of media content, which fulfil different purposes: those that entertain, educate, and/or inform.

Teachers and lecturers should consider candidate preferences, 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 understand the clear difference between questions that 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.

Candidates should have the opportunity to study different genres from different time periods when preparing for the analysis of a media text section.

Component 2: assignment

To encourage engagement, centres should incorporate candidate preferences when creating the brief. However, giving too much freedom can lead to candidates not prioritising tasks. Asking the candidates to design a media product, for example a new toy, and then 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, candidates must understand clearly that it is the media product they are researching, planning, and developing, not the consumer product.

Candidates should complete clear research before making planning decisions. Some candidates seem to rely on impressions that they have received about what certain audience segments ‘might like’. It is crucial that candidates write up their notes on planning as they work through the assignment rather than tackling this at the end. They should demonstrate full understanding of how research into audience, internal and/or external institutional factors, and key aspects has influenced their plans, rather than simply reverting to describing the media content they produced.

Centres should take care with group productions, particularly with research in the planning section. Candidates must have a clear idea of their individual roles.

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

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

As mentioned above, a template or set structure is often helpful for candidates and ensures they make appropriate connections and clearly separate their responses.

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.