Course Report 2017

Subject	Media
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

The 2017 question paper performed as expected and the grade boundary was set as intended.

It was clear that most practitioners have taught appropriate media content which was stimulating, age appropriate and varied.

The question paper allowed candidates to demonstrate sound media knowledge of the key aspects, and there was evidence of careful preparation and guidance. Some questions proved to be more demanding than others, as is usual in examination procedures.

The question paper is worth 50 marks.

Component 2: assignment

The assignment performed as expected and the grade boundary was set as intended.

The requirements for the assignment have not changed and it is evident that most centres and candidates understand what is required.

As in previous years, there were some original, entertaining and creative assignments (particularly in film) where candidates showed considerable technical expertise. Where candidates understood the importance of their written responses, not the 'finish' of the media content, high marks were gained.

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

This year fewer candidates were supplied with the wrong task (which can be found in the Course Assessment Task document). However, a small number of centres incorrectly sent the Creating Media Content unit for the Planning section. Similarly, there were fewer candidates incorrectly using the Higher Media format, which is significantly different.

The assignment is worth 50 marks and has two sections. Section 1 Planning is worth 25 marks and Section 2 Development is worth 25 marks.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Many candidates coped well with the paper and showed considerable knowledge. Varied and appropriate content had been taught, and the candidates made sensible choices in matching this to the questions.

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

Questions which asked candidates to describe, rather than explain, tended to achieve higher marks.

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(a) Representation – creating and challenging stereotypes

Popular approaches were to describe representations of gender, teenagers, heroes and villains. Film was the most common medium with action, drama and horror being the most referenced.

Question 2(a) Institutions – internal and external factors

Most candidates were able to describe two factors, with copyright, budget, and health and safety being the most referenced.

Component 2: assignment

Section 1: planning

Most teachers/lecturers had negotiated interesting, personalised briefs with their candidates and given clear direction.

Many candidates had conducted relevant, targeted research, and could explain the relationship between the research findings and the resultant planning decisions made. This was particularly the case with research into audience desires and needs.

Where candidates had written up their notes at the time of their research, higher marks were gained.

Section 2: development

Assignments which allowed candidates to be creative worked well, whether in producing storyboards, posters or moving image texts. Candidates were able to see what had worked most successfully, in their use of any of the key aspects of media, and discuss it in detail. On the whole, their creative intentions were realised. The standard of some of the submissions was extremely high, in particular films and storyboards. Digital techniques were used widely but many candidates achieved high marks even if their products were not highly finished, because their creative intentions were clear.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Question 1(b) Language features used to create/challenge stereotypes

Candidate performance in this question was inconsistent. Some candidates misinterpreted language to simply mean dialogue, and answered the question as if they were analysing a play, rather than a moving image text. This was also the case for print advertisements, with some only focusing on the words, and not discussing fonts, layout etc. Whilst some credit can be given for this, it does not demonstrate a clear understanding of media and did not achieve high marks. Detailed reference to codes such as mise-en-scène, camera work, lighting, sound, editing, layout etc was missing. The Course Assessment Specification clarifies this, as language is a key aspect of media.

Questions 2(a) and 2(b) Institutions – internal and external factors

Not all candidates understood what internal and external factors meant, and provided irrelevant information.

Question 4 Society

Some candidates incorrectly discussed how media content had affected society, rather than how society had affected media content as required by the question.

Component 2: assignment

Section 1: Planning

Some candidates did not make clear causal points showing the relationship between the research findings, and the resultant planning decision made. This often seemed to be because they had written up the planning *after* they had made the product, and had forgotten the reasons behind their decisions.

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

Some candidates started well, providing detailed answers, but these reduced in quality as they worked through the five questions.

Section 2: Development

A few centres sent Higher Media responses to Section 2, which significantly lowered their candidates' marks because the two courses have different requirements. Not all centres used the five-question structure for the development section, and either submitted too many or too few examples.

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

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Centres new to the course should ensure knowledgeable staff are delivering the qualification, and seek support, training and development where appropriate.

Component 1: question paper

As with previous years, it is paramount that candidates are provided with a selection of texts to choose from in answering the questions — some questions are more suited to certain types of media content. The roles of media should be taught with different types of media content, ie those that entertain, educate and/or inform.

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.

Practitioners should refer to the Course Specification to ensure that all possible areas for the sampling of assessment have been covered.

Component 2: assignment

Candidate preferences should be incorporated when creating the brief, to encourage engagement. Asking the candidates to design a media product, eg a new shampoo, and then create a media text to advertise it, can result in the candidate spending too long on creating a consumer product, rather than the media content.

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.

The SQA Understanding Standards material is a good place to look for examples, and the webinar also offers advice.

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.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	889

Number of resulted entries in 2017	1003

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	23.3%	23.3%	234	70
B	21.7%	45.1%	218	60
C	22.1%	67.2%	222	50
D	8.2%	75.4%	82	45
No award	24.6%	-	247	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

♦ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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.

♦ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). 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 management team at SQA.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

♦ 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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this 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.

♦ 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.