



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject	Media Studies
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Performance in both the Question Paper and Unseen Analysis was very similar to previous years, with average marks being almost identical. Knowledge and application of both analysis and production skills reflected high levels of critical awareness and understanding of the interrelationships between these two areas. A varied and interesting range of texts for analysis, and the creativity conveyed in production, reflected professional, engaging and enthusiastic approaches to Media Studies learning and teaching.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Unseen Analysis

Candidates performed well when:

- ◆ the text for analysis was rich in detail, making it accessible to C-pass candidates and allowing A-pass candidates to analyse insightfully
- ◆ equal attention was given to both Categories and Language
- ◆ purpose was used to frame discussion of several elements of the text
- ◆ analysis discussed how a *range* of language codes combined to make meaning
- ◆ there was a genuine attempt to apply pre-existing knowledge of concepts such as genre conventions to the stimulus of the unseen text

Question paper

Section One: Media Analysis

Some answers demonstrated in-depth and insightful knowledge of texts and the ways in which the construction of these are influenced by the contexts of production. In all successful answers, there was some attempt to respond to the terms of the question, and at least three key aspects were analysed adequately. Very good answers integrated key aspects throughout, and discussed specific, detailed evidence from one media text to support the response to the question and analysis of key aspects.

Section Two: Media Production

Successful responses to the reflective question remained focused on the uses or impact of purpose and genre in planning. Related decisions about content, style and the use of key aspects were outlined, along with the impact of constraints and resources, where relevant. A production perspective was evident throughout, conveying an active decision-making process and a good understanding of media production practice.

There were many highly creative responses to the advertising brief and scenario questions. Candidates were able to draw on their knowledge of lifestyles and issues as well as the

conventions of popular magazine-style programmes to plan their response to the advertising brief. In the scenario question, there were some very well constructed sequences where conventions of the spy/thriller genre in particular were used to demonstrate excellent knowledge of film language and pacing. In both questions, candidates who used and justified a range of codes in their responses to the creative questions were well rewarded.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Unseen Analysis

Weak answers were often characterised by explanation rather than analysis. Here, candidates listed or identified categories and language codes and conventions without much comment and with little attempt to discuss how these combined in the text to create meaning or achieve a purpose. Other candidates favoured one key aspect considerably over the other and therefore failed to meet the basic criteria for a pass, which is to analyse both Categories and Language adequately.

Sometimes the text given for analysis was either too basic for a Higher level analysis, or too long, which often resulted in superficial listing of textual elements at the expense of analysis.

Question paper

Section One: Media Analysis

As in previous years, some candidates found it difficult to apply their knowledge of a media text to the focus of individual questions, and tended to provide a run-through of the key aspects of their text with limited integration and little attempt to answer the question. Others failed to analyse three key aspects from narrative, representation, audience and institution, and therefore did not meet the basic requirements for a pass.

Section Two: Media Production

Most of those who chose the reflective question were able to make reference to purpose and genre, but weaker answers tended to mainly describe the finished product in these terms. In this respect their answer was almost like a response to an unseen analysis task. Other poor reflective answers were characterised by a tendency to simply describe the production process that was followed, and any problems encountered. This meant that the planning stage was not adequately addressed and there was little discussion of the relationship between the process and the planned content.

Weaker answers to the advertising brief tended to focus on specific lifestyle issues and problems rather than the programme brief, and were often inappropriate to the target audience specified. In the scenario question, poorer answers mainly comprised descriptions of action and set rather than a discussion of codes to produce the scene. In both questions, often only a very limited number of codes were used and responses did not convey Higher-level knowledge or understanding of production perspectives and how to manipulate media codes to create meaning or target an audience.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	1140
Number of resulted entries in 2015	500

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	12.0%	12.0%	60	69
B	29.8%	41.8%	149	57
C	32.2%	74.0%	161	46
D	11.8%	85.8%	59	40
No award	14.2%	-	71	-

Assessments performed as intended. No reason to adjust Grade Boundaries.

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.