Course Report 2018

Subject	Media
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

Overall, the question paper performed as intended. Some candidates responded to questions on narrative, preferred readings, and influencing behaviours and attitudes using the same media text and, as a result, they tended to use the same evidence in their responses to the questions. The slight overlap in these concepts was taken into account when setting the grade boundary. The question paper allowed candidates to demonstrate sound knowledge of the key aspects of media, and there was evidence of careful preparation and guidance.

A new section worth 10 marks, 'Analysis of a media text', was added to the question paper from session 2017–18. Candidates engaged well with the task, using appropriate media knowledge.

It was clear that most teachers and lecturers had covered appropriate media content that was stimulating, age appropriate and varied. Most teachers and lecturers are preparing candidates with a selection of texts that are appropriate for different question types and this helped them avoid repetition.

Component 2: assignment

The assignment performed as expected. The requirements for the assignment changed in session 2017–18, with 10 marks added to the 'development' section, which requires candidates to evaluate their assignments. It is evident that most centres and candidates understand what is now required.

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 — they gained high marks.

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

This year 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 assignment assessment task.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Many candidates approached the question paper sensibly and showed considerable knowledge. They made good choices in matching variable and appropriate content 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.

The new section, 'Analysis of a media text', allowed candidates an additional opportunity to display their knowledge of the key aspects of media.

Section 1: Analysis of media content in context

Question 1(a) — representation — created by language

Popular approaches to this question were to describe representations of gender, teenagers, heroes and villains. Film was the most common medium with the 'superhero' genre, dramas, and those with a teenage target audience being the most referenced. Most candidates were able to describe two representations.

Question 2(a) — description of tone

Most candidates were able to describe an example of tone, usually selecting sad or humorous.

Question 3 — narrative

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.

Section 2: Analysis of a media text

Question 6

Most candidates selected the film poster for *Haywire*. They were able to write extensively on colour, layout, font, representation and institutions, and relate these to the target audience and/or purpose. The magazine option was the least popular, but those who attempted this achieved many marks discussing its unique ways of targeting an audience.

Component 2: assignment

Section 1: planning

Most teachers and lecturers had negotiated interesting, personalised briefs with their candidates and given clear direction. There was increased confidence in answering question 1 on audience, and questions 3 and 4 on internal and external controls.

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

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

Section 2: development

The standard of some of the submissions was impressive, 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. Assignments which allowed candidates to use their imagination worked well, whether in producing storyboards, posters or moving image texts. On the whole, their creative intentions were realised when the brief was clear and simple. Short films made on mobile phones showed how basic equipment could be successful.

The requirement to evaluate their content worked well for most candidates, as they now have the opportunity to explain what improvements they could make. This approach proved to be fairly straightforward, even for storyboards where the product hadn't been made.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Question 1(b) — representation — created by language
As was the case in 2017, some candidates misinterpreted 'language' to simply mean dialogue. They then 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 candidates only focusing on the words, and not discussing fonts, layout, colour etc. While some credit can be given for this, it does not demonstrate a clear understanding of media and cannot achieve high marks. Detailed reference to codes such as mise-en-scène, camera work, lighting, sound, editing, layout was sometimes missing. The course specification states that language is a key aspect of media. This was also highlighted in last year's course report.

Other candidates focused on simply re-telling moments from the plot in relation to representation, with no reference to language, as required by the question.

Question 4(a) and 4(b) — preferred reading
Not all candidates understood what 'preferred reading' meant, and provided irrelevant information. This is a common media term and is listed as mandatory content in the course

specification. When candidates chose texts with a clear message, such as political media content, or commercial advertising, this question was more straightforward. Some candidates used the same information from question 1 on representation, with the preferred reading being that you would either like or dislike a character. Where new points were made in relation to this, some could be awarded, but there was occasionally lots of simple repetition.

Question 5(a) and 5(b) — influencing attitudes and behaviours
This question proved more difficult when discussing commercial film, where the clear purpose is simply to entertain, rather than influence attitudes or behaviours. Commercial advertising and public service adverts were more successful.

Component 2: assignment

Section 1: planning
Some candidates are still discussing research into content in question 1 (audience). Published understanding standards material demonstrates how this could be improved.

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

Section 2: development
Some candidates didn't structure their responses as (a) and (b), as exemplified in the assignment assessment task and understanding standards material. This meant that evaluation (as required by part b) was implicit and more difficult to reward, or missing completely.

Some candidates did not make their individual input into a group production clear enough.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Centres delivering the course for the first time should ensure knowledgeable staff deliver the qualification, and seek support, training and development where appropriate. Support materials include understanding standards material, webinars and the course support notes which are an appendix to the course specification. There is also a Subject Implementation Manager for Media who can support centres.

Component 1: question paper

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the course specification to ensure that all mandatory course content has been covered. Some very strong candidates could not access a considerable number of marks because they did not know what 'preferred reading' meant.

As with previous years, it is of paramount importance that candidates are provided with a selection of texts that they can draw on when answering 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, that is, 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 while overly complicated narratives can be hard to deconstruct. Similarly, sharply defined representations work very well.

Candidates should be taught 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.

When preparing for the 'Analysis of a media text' section, different genres from different time periods should be covered.

Component 2: assignment

Candidate preferences should be incorporated when creating the brief to encourage engagement. However, giving too much freedom can lead to candidates not prioritising tasks. Asking the candidates to design a media product, for example, an energy drink, 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, it must be made clear to candidates that it is the media product they are researching, planning and developing, not the consumer product.

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.

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 that each candidate has individual input, 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 2017	1003

Number of resulted entries in 2018	1007

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	24.5%	24.5%	247	84
B	20.6%	45.1%	207	71
C	22.4%	67.5%	226	59
D	16.9%	84.4%	170	46
No award	15.6%	-	157	-

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 which 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.

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 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.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.