# Course report 2019

| 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 post-results services.

# Section 1: comments on the assessment

## Question paper 1: Analysis of media content

Question paper 1 performed as expected. Candidates on the whole dealt well with the new question paper format, integrating both question 1(b) and question 2(b), although there continued to be a significant number of responses where the connections between content and context being referenced by candidates were at times superficial, and comment on the connection was not always in the depth and detail required at Higher.

The questions sampled institutions and representations topics, both of which have been sampled before. Most candidates responded to these concepts appropriately.

The new unseen element of the paper, question 3, performed well.

There was some evidence that candidates would benefit from additional reading time and, as a result, 15 extra minutes has been added to this question paper making the new exam time two and a half hours. This change is reflected in the published 2020 exam timetable.

## Question paper 2: The role of media

Question paper 2 performed as expected, with candidates achieving consistently in the task.

The performance of candidates across this component was stronger than last year.

## Assignment

The assignment performed as expected, with candidates achieving consistently across all parts of each section of the task.

The performance of candidates across this component was slightly stronger than last year.

# Section 2: comments on candidate performance

## Areas that candidates performed well in

### Question paper 1: Analysis of media content

### Section 1: Analysis of media content in context

### Question 1

Candidates were successful in their responses to the question when they gave details of how specific institutional factors had influenced specific examples of media content in part (a), and then integrated these or other institutional factors in their discussion of categories and/or language and/or narrative in part (b).

### (a) Institutions

Where candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of how specific institutional factors had an impact on the text(s) studied, they performed well in this question.

There were some strong answers where candidates discussed specific, relevant institutional factors and gave details on how these factors had influenced the media content exemplified in specific ways. For example, some candidates discussed the impact of the institutional factor of budget on *The Dark Knight* and went on to give details about how the large budget allowed Christopher Nolan to cast big stars and use IMAX cameras, discussing specific examples of the impact of this on the finished film. Other candidates discussed the impact of the Blumhouse model on *Get Out* and how the low budget led to a creative use of special effects, but the production model led to more artistic freedom for the director.

### (b) Categories and/or language and/or narrative plus institutions

Many candidates found it fairly straightforward to write about these key aspects and gave detailed responses analysing specific examples of categories and/or language and/or narrative in the media content they had studied. Successful candidates then analysed how these had been influenced by relevant institutional factors. This was done in a range of ways such as: analysing horror genre conventions such as gore, in relation to the impact of budget on the effectiveness of special effects in films such as *Halloween* v *Scream;* analysing the use of binary oppositions in *Bowling for Columbine* in relation to the institutional factor of Michael Moore as auteur; discussing the use of the very long take in Cuarón's *Children of Men* in terms of camera and editing, and relating this to institutional factors of budget and technology.

### Question 2

Candidates were successful in their responses to the question when they analysed specific representations in the media content they had studied in detail in part (a), and then integrated these or other representations in their discussion of society and/or audience in part (b).

**(a) Representations**

Candidates performed well when they analysed specific representations in detail, giving detailed examples from the media content they studied to illustrate how these representations had been constructed and commenting on why they had been constructed in this way. A wide range of representations were analysed in candidates' responses, drawing from a range of films and TV shows including: the representations of race and gender in films such as *Get Out* or *Black Panther*; anti-stereotypical representations of women in TV shows such as *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* or *Killing Eve*; representations of the working class and expectations of gender roles in *Billy Elliot*; representations of extremists in Louis Theroux's documentaries.

**(b) Audience and/or society plus representations**

Successful candidates analysed their chosen context(s) by giving specific examples of society and/or audience factors relevant to the text(s) they studied and then discussing how these factors had influenced representations.

Audience factors analysed by candidates included examples such as the representations of female characters and relating this to specific responses from both female and male audiences in *Thelma and Louise;* or discussing the representations of ethnic minorities in *Do The Right Thing* and relating this to how members of ethnic minorities in the audience might respond to this.

Society factors discussed included a consideration of how issues in society at the time of a film's production could be seen to impact the text, such as Black Lives Matters influencing *Get Out*; or analysing how the growth in feminist discourses has led to casting female leads in big budget productions such as the *Star Wars* franchise. Other responses considered society factors relating to the time the film was set, such as an analysis of how representations of women and homosexuality in *The Shawshank Redemption* could be seen to reflect the attitudes of the day.

**Section 2: Analysis of media texts**

**Question 3**

Candidates were successful in this task when they selected and analysed examples from their chosen pair of texts, discussing in detail how key aspects of media literacy had been used in the examples. Most candidates focused heavily on the use of language codes, and then related their analysis of these codes to other key aspects. Where candidates made at least five developed points of analysis in their responses, which included developed comment comparing the two texts, they were able to gain full marks.

An approach which worked well for candidates was to focus on similarities and differences between the texts throughout their response. This allowed them to make developed points of analysis and also ensured they were making comparisons between the texts, enabling them to access the full range of marks available.

The vast majority of candidates chose to analyse Pair A (film posters) and successfully demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the key aspects in doing so. As most candidates analyse film for the other parts of this paper, it appears that they are most

comfortable transferring their understanding of that form to this task, and candidates generally applied their knowledge successfully in their analysis of the film posters.

A smaller number of candidates analysed Pairs B and C. Candidates were most successful in this when they focused on the purpose of the texts and related their analysis of specific examples from both texts in the pair to achieving this purpose.

## Question paper 2: The role of media

Candidates were well rewarded when they gave several detailed points of information or ideas relevant to the roles of media referenced in the task, made comment on these points and how they related to specific examples of media content, and drew at least one conclusion with reference to the task and/or the ideas discussed in the essay.

There were some excellent responses where candidates developed a clear line of argument which showed not only their knowledge of relevant issues but also an obvious effort to engage with them in terms of the task, by offering critical comment and/or personal opinions. At times these responses drew conclusions throughout the essay as relevant to their line of argument, while at others a clear conclusion was drawn at the end of the essay. Such answers made several detailed references to media content to exemplify points, arguments or opinions. Sometimes the references made were to a range of content discussed in a more general way, and sometimes they included close textual exemplification and/or references to key aspects, where appropriate.

Some candidates discussed a range of articles from the press, exemplifying the various ways that while the press ostensibly meets the needs for information or education, press bias can also lead to influencing attitudes, which was then exemplified through specific examples of how the press dealt with a story. These candidates examined the various ways a newspaper might use a story to educate or inform, whilst also considering how particular bias linked to ownership or political allegiance could lead to an influence on attitudes, whether intentional or unintentional, in relation to specific headlines or articles. Other successful candidates chose to focus on a small number of adverts, using specific details from the adverts in order to exemplify the points being made in their response to the question stem. These candidates had a range of adverts from which to select exemplification and were able to discuss how the adverts influenced behaviour or attitudes. They were then able to bring into their discussion the way in which some adverts met the need for entertainment whilst others, such as Public Service Announcements, met needs for information or education. In all cases, successful candidates made developed comments about the references they used in their responses, which related their chosen examples logically to their discussion of the task.

Candidates in general performed better when they looked at a range of texts rather than using a close analysis of one specific text to exemplify their points, arguments or opinions.

Successful responses were structured in an integrated fashion, giving detailed references to media content to exemplify the points being made throughout their response to the task.

**Assignment**

**Section 1: planning**

Candidates performed best when they dealt with each part of the planning section separately, rather than by producing an integrated response.

Successful answers were characterised by clear points of justification which provided a rationale for planning decisions and demonstrated a clear relationship between the decision and the specific area given in the task.

Successful responses for individual parts were usually structured in one of two ways: either giving the details of a planning decision followed by a relevant justification; or giving details of the brief, creative ideas or research in justification of a detailed planning decision taken. In either case, marks were awarded for points of justification: each clear justification was awarded one mark, and additional marks could be gained for further development of a justification. Further development was characterised by additional details of the planning decision or research undertaken.

**1(a) Creative intentions in response to the brief:**

Successful points typically covered details of any relevant plan(s) made which could be justified in terms of such things as a negotiation of the genre, purpose, medium, form, audience, stimulus etc; or details of the brief and how the candidate hoped to research, include or achieve these. Points of justification included general considerations of the brief, such as a discussion of how specific decisions relating to things like genre, audience or form had been arrived at, or references to specific and detailed plans for research which would be carried out, such as a need to find out how specific genre conventions were used in professionally produced content, or to discover specific preferences from the target audience(s), with justification for this research.

**1(b) and (c) Content research:**

Successful points typically covered justification of plans for content, codes, structure etc, in relation to content research, drawing on professional practice and common, interesting or inspirational techniques used in examples of media content. Detailed and specific research findings on content were included as part of the justification. A large number of candidates focused primarily on language codes for 1(b), and for their additional content research in 1(c) focused on a combination of narrative conventions, categories and/or representations.

**1(d) Production roles:**

Successful points typically covered details of specific plans for how a production role would be carried out. Some candidates successfully outlined five plans relating to one production role, while others chose to justify plans relating to several different production roles. There was no requirement for plans to be justified by research for this response, but this was an approach taken by a number of successful candidates. Other candidates chose to justify their plans with specific details which revealed their understanding of that production role.

**1(e) Audience:**

Successful points typically covered plans justified in relation to audience targeting, preferred reading, minimising differential decoding, meeting needs, influencing, persuading etc.

Specific, relevant and detailed research findings relating to audience needs and expectations were included as part of the justification. For a large number of successful candidates, the findings were based on specific audience research carried out via surveys, questionnaires or focus groups.

**1(f) Institutional context:**

Successful points typically covered justification of plans for the production process, or plans for content, codes, structure etc, were made in relation to the constraints or opportunities of the institutional context(s). Detailed and specific research findings relating to the specific institutional contexts (such as budget, equipment, legislation, rules and regulations, health and safety) were included as part of the justification.

**Section 2: Development**

**2(a) Evaluation of production process**

Candidates were able to gain the highest marks when they gave at least four developed points of evaluation. Developed points of evaluation gave detailed information about how effectively specific production roles had been carried out, and about the nature and implications of institutional contexts (whether opportunities: such as available equipment or prior skills and knowledge that could be used; or constraints: such as health and safety considerations, or school and/or industry rules or regulations).

Successful evaluations reflected upon decisions about either the content and/or the production process made as a result of specific production roles or institutional opportunities or constraints. There was also (and crucially) evaluation of the effectiveness of the decisions made, either in terms of the finished content or production process. Consideration of the finished content submitted indicated that the contexts and development referenced were appropriate and supported the discussion.

**2(b) Evaluation of finished content**

Candidates who were diligent throughout the assignment generally did well in this task. Careful research, planning and organisation meant that such candidates had a clear sense of what they had wanted to achieve and were therefore able to evaluate whether or not they had succeeded. In this respect, well planned content provided plenty of source material for the evaluation, and the combination of the two was rewarded. Even where available resources did not enable a high technical finish, carefully made content in combination with a considered piece of discussion and evaluation conveyed a clear understanding of how to effectively manipulate media codes. Through evaluating how effectively the finished content did or did not achieve the initial creative intentions, and discussing the reasons for this, candidates were able to provide developed points of evaluation.

Candidates achieving the highest marks gave five or more developed points of evaluation and supported these with a discussion of specific, detailed examples from the finished content. They did more than discuss individual examples of single codes, instead evaluating, in detail, how codes worked together by considering such things as: the effectiveness of the construction of a series of shots or sequences; how specific print codes were combined to make meaning; the codes used in the construction of a particular representation; the combined effect of a range of codes used in a specific scene or sequence.

# Areas that candidates found demanding

## Question paper 1: Analysis of media content

### Section 1: Analysis of media content in context

### Question 1

#### (a) Institutions

Weaker answers tended to describe institutional factors in a general way, rather than giving details on the factors and how they had influenced the media content, as required by the task. Other weaker answers seemed to be unclear on what were relevant institutional factors. Some candidates didn't comment on *how* the examples they selected from the texts had been influenced by institutional factors, which meant they were unable to access the higher mark bands.

There was also a significant number of candidates who discussed concepts which weren't relevant institutional factors and therefore could not be given credit as they did not respond appropriately to the task.

#### (b) Categories and/or language and/or narrative plus institutions

Weaker answers explained the use of categories and/or language and/or narrative in the media content studied, rather than analysing how specific examples of these key aspects had been influenced by institutional factors, as directed by the task. In such answers, candidates mainly discussed how examples of these key aspects could be seen in the media content. Sometimes there were implicit or basic statements about how these could link to generic institutional factors (for example a big budget allows more convincing special effects for a horror film), but in general there was little in the way of comment on specific examples.

### Question 2

#### (a) Representations

Weaker answers tended to describe representations in the texts, rather than analysing them in detail, as required by the task. They also tended to try to cover a broad range of representations rather than focusing on a small number (two or three) in the depth and detail required by this task. Other weaker answers seemed to be unclear on what were relevant representations, whilst other responses didn't comment on *how* or *why* the representations referenced had been constructed.

#### (b) Audience and/or society plus representations

Weaker answers tended to identify or explain rather than analyse the contexts of audience and/or society. These answers often read like an extended list of concept-plus-example, with very little comment about how the examples had influenced representations. Other responses made links to audience reactions and/or society factors in relation to representations discussed in 2(a), but there was little discussion of the factors referred to. Such answers tended to be brief and not of the depth or detail expected at Higher.

**Section 2: Analysis of media texts**

**Question 3**

Weaker answers tended to describe or explain rather than analyse in detail examples from the selected pair of texts. These answers often read like extended lists of examples of codes from one or both of the print texts, with a brief explanation of the significance of things such as colour, layout or casting, but without analysing them in the depth or detail expected at Higher. Weaker responses also tended to focus on one text and then the other, without making the comparison required by the task.

## Question paper 2: The role of media

Weaker answers tended to focus on explaining one or more ways in which specific examples of media content could be said to influence attitudes or behaviour, or to meet audience needs. Although valid information was given, there tended to be very little debate, comment or opinion relating this information to the task. Where candidates did not attempt to discuss the examples they had given in relation to the task, the response could not be well rewarded. Other weaker answers were characterised by what seemed to be a pre-prepared essay for the role of media question. Some candidates appeared to have prepared an essay for a generic task, some even referencing all three roles of media, and these responses could not gain much credit as the added value of this component is that candidates apply their knowledge to a previously unseen task, and marks are awarded for responses to the specific question given in the question paper.

There were also a number of weaker responses where candidates did not present two sides of an argument and merely wrote several paragraphs making points about the way different texts influenced behaviour and/or attitudes, or met audience needs, but didn't present a debate or line of argument. This meant that these candidates did not present a discussion or draw a conclusion in terms of the task, which meant they could not be as well rewarded for the discussion element of the task.

Some candidates found it difficult to access marks because references to media content were sparse and/or lacked comment that would help relate the references logically to the points made. In addition, some references were very broad or vague and did not clearly support points made.

## Assignment

### Section 1: Planning

An effective brief which allows candidates plenty of scope to negotiate, research and plan is crucial. In centres where candidates were presented with a restrictive brief to work with, this led to weaker responses as candidates did not have enough scope to make specific and detailed plans which they were able to justify. This was also an issue in some cases where candidates worked in a group to produce a collaborative piece of content but hadn't been given clear guidance on how to highlight their own contribution in their written work. A successful brief should allow candidates to make clearly justified plans, arising from their negotiations and research. Briefs such as planning and creating a film in 48 hours, or ones which specified too many parameters (such as specifying a narrow target audience, detailed purpose, genre etc) without room for negotiation, led to a lack of justification for planning decisions particularly in Section 1(a).

In terms of the brief set by centres, it is also worth noting that briefs which asked candidates to produce too much or too little content also led to weaker responses. A moving image text of up to 2-3 minutes was ample to allow a candidate to successfully complete the written work in both the planning and evaluation sections to a high standard. A brief which required candidates to produce something longer led to candidates spending too long on the product and insufficient time on their written work. In contrast, a brief requiring just one print text was too restrictive and led to weaker responses as candidates found it challenging to find sufficient different plans to justify for each of the six parts in Section 1. These candidates also struggled to find sufficient examples to evaluate from their finished content in Section 2.

Some justifications were very short and did not provide the amount of detail expected at Higher. In particular, weaker answers relating to institutional contexts often tended to consist of descriptions of what couldn't be done, rather than a justification of plans made to deal with constraints or to benefit from opportunities. Although there were fewer instances of this, there were still candidates who produced an extended holistic response covering all six parts of section 1. These responses tended to provide less detail than those which dealt with each part separately. Holistic responses often had difficulty clearly conveying what active planning decisions had been taken and/or what the justifications behind them were. In some responses there was repetition of points between the six parts.

Some responses to section 1: planning appeared to have been written after the development stage of the assignment had been completed. This may have made it difficult for some candidates to remember what they originally planned and why, and at times their responses were little more than a description of the final product and process, which couldn't gain much credit for planning.

## Section 2: Development

### 2(a) Evaluation of production process

Weaker answers were most often characterised by a tendency to describe the contexts and problems faced during production and/or in a given production role, without much discussion of steps taken to resolve the problems or evaluation of how successful these steps were in resolving the issue. In this respect, the responses read like production diaries detailing what was carried out on a daily or weekly basis. There was little or no attempt to evaluate how well the individual had performed or how successful the finished content was, given the constraints. In addition, in some cases consideration of the final content sometimes revealed that the contexts referenced were irrelevant because they didn't relate to the media content created, so could not be credited.

### 2(b) Evaluation of finished content

Weaker evaluations tended to deal with a few individual codes such as one particular camera angle, or the use of a particular font. Whilst these are appropriate codes to *include* in an evaluation, discussing them in isolation makes it difficult to produce the considered, reflective evaluation required at Higher and rewarded by the marking scheme. Some evaluations consisted mainly of description of the final content, with some indication of the planned creative intentions. It was difficult to find clear points of evaluation in such responses, although simple evaluative comments were rewarded where possible. Some candidates did attempt to evaluate examples from the finished content, but the responses

lacked a developed discussion of the original intent and merely made evaluative statements about whether the finished content was effective or not. As such, these responses lacked the developed points of evaluation required in the higher mark bands.

# Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

## Question paper 1: analysis of media content

For questions 1 and 2, candidates should be encouraged to respond to parts 1(a) and 1(b), and 2(a) and 2(b), separately as this supports candidates in focusing their responses on addressing what is required by that part of the task. Time should be spent in class looking at ways in which the different contexts and key aspects of content can be seen to integrate with each other, so that candidates are comfortable with analysing these connections in response to the tasks set in the question paper.

Teachers and lecturers should also ensure candidates are comfortable with all the terminology which might arise in the question paper, and that candidates are familiar with applying these concepts to the text(s) they have studied.

Currently most centres focus on feature length films, either fiction or non-fiction, for this section. This offers candidates a wealth of material from which to draw exemplification, and time should be spent with candidates exploring how best to select and use evidence from the text(s) studied in their analysis. Candidates can perform well after studying just one rich text, but they can also benefit from studying a few different texts which could be linked either by franchise, genre, theme or some other aspect. In both cases, teachers and lecturers should be ensure candidates have a firm understanding of all seven concepts which could be sampled in the question paper, and support them to develop 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 be encouraged to select the pair of texts which best fits with the type of texts they have studied during the course. In preparation for the question paper, time should be spent in class analysing a diverse range of pairs of texts, covering different genres, eras, styles and so on. There should be an emphasis on discussing a pair of texts together, focusing on picking out similarities and differences between the texts to analyse. Candidates should practise making developed points of analysis of a combination of codes and including in this a developed comparison between the pair of texts, rather than focusing on isolated codes in one text or the other.

## Question paper 2: The role of media

Candidates should be taught to respond to the specific task in the question paper. In a single essay-style response they should provide specific and detailed evidence from texts they studied to back up points they make in response to the task. Studying a selection of texts in class will allow candidates to select from a range of evidence and ensure they are able to respond to the specifics of the task set in the question paper.

It is essential that candidates understand the importance of responding to the question paper task instead of using a pre-prepared essay because marks are awarded for their ability to discuss the question stem.

The texts studied by candidates should provide them with a range of evidence which will allow them to discuss different sides of an argument in relation to any of the three roles of media which could be sampled.

## Assignment

For the assignment, it is essential that a suitable brief is set by centres. This should provide candidates with some form of creative stimulus, but should not restrict their ability to negotiate and/or make their own decisions.

The brief should also take into account the technology available to candidates in that centre, and any other institutional restrictions that may have an impact. Good practice is to provide candidates with two or more possible stimuli, and also some room for negotiation of things such as form, medium, genre, target audience, purpose etc. This gives candidates some parameters to work within but is not so restrictive that they will not be able to make sufficient justified plans to access the full range of marks available in section 1.

It is also highly recommended that the brief specifies that moving image texts be no longer than 2-3 minutes, and that print posters should be part of a campaign of at least three posters to allow candidates a sufficient range of codes to discuss.

It is perfectly acceptable for candidates to work as part of a group to produce their media content, but clear parameters in terms of individual roles and responsibilities should be highlighted from the outset. All 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 be encouraged to complete their 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. The written responses for this section should be completed before candidates create their media content, and this then gives them a logical progression into section 2 where they evaluate how effective their plans were when put into effect.

For section 2, it is important to make clear to candidates that they must *evaluate* in order 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 in which they are working 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 audience responses. 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 disc or memory stick per packet, using a standard format which can be easily read by players such as VLC or Quicktime. Centres should check that each text on the disc 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 and not hand drawings or sketches.

# Grade boundary and statistical information:

## Statistical information: update on courses

| Number of resulted entries in 2018 | 1061 |
|---|---|

| Number of resulted entries in 2019 | 999 |
|---|---|

## 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** | 19.2% | 19.2% | 192 | 80 |
| **B** | 23.8% | 43.0% | 238 | 69 |
| **C** | 25.6% | 68.7% | 256 | 58 |
| **D** | 19.2% | 87.9% | 192 | 47 |
| **No award** | 12.1% | - | 121 | - |

# 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 that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
♦ 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 head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
♦ Where standards 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 to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.