

CCEA GCE - Journalism in the Media and Communications Industry
(Summer Series) 2014

Chief Examiner's and Principal Moderator's Report

journalism

in the Media and Communications Industry (JMC)

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Journalism in the Media and Communications Industry for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

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GCE JOURNALISM IN THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 Journalism in Print

There was a relatively small cohort for this first AS level examination in Journalism in the Media and Communications Industry, nevertheless the examining team were impressed by the journalistic skills which were demonstrated by candidates under this challenging exam structure. Candidates engaged with the tasks in a meaningful way and this clearly reflects the good practice going on in classrooms as candidates prepare for both the portfolio and exam elements.

The majority of candidates were able to complete all of the tasks and worked diligently to the given word limits; this is to be commended and shows how candidates have a good understanding of the time pressures frequently imposed upon journalists working in the industry.

Section A

Q1 This analytical task was approached well by most candidates with many articulating the key differences between the stimulus pieces in an impressive and coherent manner. It is important for candidates to anchor their arguments within the information provided i.e. generic comments about the differences between tabloids and broadsheets should be avoided (especially as this series' stimuli did not include a tabloid). Similarly, basic comments concerning the use of the inverted pyramid structure were not deemed to be creditworthy at AS level.

The strengths of most responses were in the analysis of *News Angle and Content* and *Language and Style*. Candidates meaningfully contrasted the articles' stances with examples and explanations which highlighted a secure degree of understanding of these elements. The areas of *Target Audience* and *Ownership* were dealt with less successfully. It is appreciated that the four bullet points contained within the question are intrinsically linked and inter-dependent; notwithstanding, the more successful candidates were able to offer meaningful, albeit brief, insights into how the key areas of *Target Audience* and *Ownership* influence an article's final presentation. Those who did not make any comments on the third and fourth bullet points were still rewarded for their discussion/analysis of the other two areas.

Q2 (a) Candidates clearly enjoyed this task and were able to demonstrate their ability to work to the word limit in an impressive manner. This task did not require a headline and perhaps highlighted a misconception between headlines and opening sentences as many missed the opportunity to clearly convey their chosen angle immediately e.g. *Local hero* or *Baby saved*. The majority of responses were sensitive to the format indicated (a local weekly newspaper) and correctly avoided unnecessarily sensationalising the story.

The most common error within this task was that a worrying number of candidates included the libellous claims of Lynne Stewart; the inclusion of her "practically child neglect" comment would leave the newspaper open to legal action. All journalists must take responsibility for the sources they use and are bound by legal and ethical restrictions. Candidates are expected to understand

that not all sources are reliable and judgement is required by the reporter when considering which sources of information to include. Another general weakness noted in the responses to this task was the incorrect introduction of quotations which impacted on the Quality of Written Communication (QWC) marks available. In addition, names were misspelt and a few candidates adopted a soft news/feature style which was not appropriate for this type of story.

The weaknesses outlined above are intended as a means of indicating how candidates could improve. Overall, the prioritisation of information, and inclusion of official sources, did indicate that candidates were adept at handling this task and the examining team enjoyed reading their responses.

- (b) This is a very brief task - and therein lies the challenge. Prioritising the information is central to success in this task as well as a clear understanding of the purpose of a Press Release. A Press Release is, by design, biased towards the client, and journalists must take care not to become a vehicle of propaganda for the person/organisation who submits the Press Release. Press Releases are merely one source of information and so, are subject to evaluation and judgement on the part of the journalist. The most successful candidates prioritised the information which was most relevant to the Target Readership and reorganised the information accordingly.

Q3 There were some superb headlines and captions offered by candidates who seemed to enjoy this opportunity to showcase their creativity. There was some evidence of confusion however, with a small number of candidates offering an additional headline instead of a caption for the photograph. While the mark scheme has applied a hierarchy to the photo selections, the examining team were keen to reward those candidates who demonstrated, through the caption, why their photo selection was both pertinent and effective.

Checking copy for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors is one aspect of a sub-editor's role. Accurate QWC is also a cornerstone of good journalistic practice. Unfortunately, it was noted that a small number of candidates had difficulty in correctly identifying the spelling and grammar errors in the first three paragraphs. The majority identified at least seven errors (and were credited regardless of the order in which these appeared on the answer booklet).

The marks allocated for this question balances the strengths demonstrated by the candidates - for example, an effective headline can compensate for the incorrect identification of spelling errors.

Section B

The time allocation of 25 minutes for this essay-style task invites succinct responses. The examining team do not expect overly-elaborate nor excessively lengthy responses. The use of illuminating examples however are central to success in this section of the exam, regardless of the question selected, as well as a clear focus on how the Key Terms of the question are being addressed.

It appeared that many candidates struggled with this element of the exam more than any other and tried (in vain) to shoe-horn knowledge from irrelevant sections of the Specification into their responses. The three Section B question options in this series were taken from one of the six subject content areas of the AS Unit 1 specification and candidates should be encouraged to prepare for this section of the exam as comprehensively as possible, demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the one-year course.

Successful responses were coherent and founded on secure knowledge of the chosen topic area. They indicated the importance of the topic on journalists/publications and also included counter-arguments (where appropriate). AS level candidates are expected to show the ability to undertake independent/autonomous study and this was evident in some responses; some however, included examples from American Law/journalism which is beyond the scope of this Specification.

The standard of responses to the paper as a whole was pleasing and shows how this first cohort of candidates were well-guided and enthused within the classroom.

Principal Moderator's Report

The standard of work in this first year of the series was varied, with some excellent pieces of work being produced by some candidates, this reflected the dedication of both students and teachers. These candidates demonstrated excellent journalistic ability, producing articles that were interesting and authentic. It was clear that candidates were well guided and motivated. Teacher annotation proved very useful in the moderation process especially where comments highlighted aspects of the work that the teacher had given credit for. Some centres demonstrated accurate and consistent marking accompanied by detailed summative comments. However, some centres found it difficult to reach an agreed standard with some evidence of leniency. Attendance at an Agreement Trial could help to alleviate this problem.

Most centres completed administrative elements diligently; Candidate Record Sheets were completed for each candidate and presented in rank order. This greatly helped in the moderation process. It should be remembered that care must be taken when calculating marks as it was noted that some centres miscalculated candidates overall marks when adding-up marks for each Assessment Objective.

Assessment Unit AS 2 Print Portfolio

This unit gives candidates an opportunity to showcase their knowledge and understanding of journalistic concepts and put them into practice. Story selection was varied and allowed candidates to pursue a topic that was of particular interest to them and their identified target audience.

Generally candidates demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding (Assessment Objective 1) in the Statement of Intentions. It should be noted that while generic remarks are needed to contextualise the fictional publication the Statement of Intentions should show relevance to the target readership and focus on the intended pieces. Outlining the intentions for each piece is expected in the Statement of Intentions, however it is appreciated that this must be concise given the word limit. The ability to offer brief but meaningful comments is a skill expected of upper level candidates and some of the best candidates demonstrated this excellently.

There were variations in the quality of the Log Books. The candidates who performed best were those candidates who demonstrated extensive research. Research should illustrate how

candidates are investigating their ideas relevant to the articles in their fictional publication. It is essential that the ten pages of the Log Book submitted enable moderators to make the appropriate judgements regarding marks awarded. The best Log Books were those used as a working document and which demonstrated thought processes and justifications for decisions made by the candidate. Log Book pages that show a wide range of primary and secondary research are advised to be included as these will help candidate achieve the top marks for planning and research. It was noted that some lapses in QWC were apparent in both Log Books and portfolio pieces and this was not reflected in the candidate's marks in some cases. Centres are reminded that QWC is a criteria for Assessment Objective 2 and therefore must be considered when awarding a mark, accurate QWC is a core skill within journalism.

Some excellent work was in evidence in the portfolio pieces. There was a wide range of stories appealing to many different target readerships (Assessment Objective 2). However, some candidates didn't tailor their articles for the intended target readership outlined in their Statement of Intentions, and in some cases it was unclear who the target readership of their publication was. Candidates must show an understanding of the different requirements for a regional/local audience and of the features of varying types of article, for example a topical news story in a local newspaper must appeal to a local readership and be newsworthy. Centres are reminded that a magazine format is an option which may better suit some candidate's interests.

The best portfolios were those that also felt like a real publication with formatting taken into consideration and a consistent style throughout (Assessment Objective 2). In some portfolios however, articles were surrounded by adverts etc. that were not appropriate given the topic of the article, for example an editorial outlining the dangers of 'nominations' surrounded by adverts for off licences.

It was noted that some truly original and interesting photographs were submitted by candidates as part of photo montage packages. However, centres are reminded that these photos should be allowed to speak for themselves. They may be accompanied by brief and informative captions and a headline but accompanying text is not appropriate and cannot be credited.

When marking holistically, centres are encouraged to annotate the pieces carefully to reflect how marks have been awarded – this will greatly assist the moderation process. It was noted that some candidates went significantly over or under the word count especially when writing feature articles. When internally assessing work cognisance should be taken of whether candidates have adhered to the specified word count – this is a key journalistic principle.

The evaluation was handled well by the some candidates. It should be noted that the evaluation should take account of both strengths and weaknesses; in many cases candidates focused too much on one of these aspects.

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