

CCEA GCE - Journalism in the Media and Communications Industry  
(Summer Series) 2015

# 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](http://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 significantly larger cohort this series and the full spectrum of ability levels were seen. The examination paper was accessible to all levels and allowed a range of skills to be evidenced. Section A provoked the most successful responses and is a reflection of the good work ongoing in classrooms. Section B responses were less impressive in the main, primarily because candidates veered off-focus from the question selected or mismanaged their time.

#### Section A

**Q1** As noted last year, success in this question hinges on candidates' ability to analyse the stimulus material provided, rather than presenting generic knowledge on different newspaper types. Sweeping generalisations demonstrate only a superficial understanding of how newspaper articles are crafted.

Responses which focused on the differing angles and prioritisation of information within the two articles were most successful. There were many responses which clearly demonstrated an astute appreciation of how the same story was presented with very different styles. Once again, the most fruitful discussions centred on the differing use of language to present the information but there was, pleasingly, a greater attempt to link this type of analysis to the interests of the target readerships.

Comments about ownership however, remain a weakness of most candidates' responses, with some candidates not recognising the partisan nature of the two articles. Misconceptions were also evident in a minority of responses (e.g. that tabloid newspapers are owned by the tax-payer).

**Q2 (a)** This task continues to provoke many excellent responses. Candidates have clearly been prepared well for this written piece and most candidates were able to present engaging and informative articles. Notwithstanding, a couple of common errors were noted by the Examining Team; for example, many referenced the diversion around the A10 as having occurred "this morning", however, The Ballynamuch Gazette is published on a Tuesday thereby making Monday's traffic event less important with regards to newsworthiness and inaccurate when referred to as having occurred on the same day as publication. A large number of candidates also made reference to Joe Avery, forgetting it seems that the target readership would have little (if any) knowledge of who Joe Avery is or what his role entails.

As with last series, a large proportion of candidates included information which would leave their publication open to legal action. Approximately one-third of candidates cited the libellous comments made by the farmer John Bates. Candidates must show their understanding of the legal framework which journalists work within but there seems to be a misconception that as long as comments are attributed to a source, they can be printed.

There were less instances of a chronological approach being adopted this series and this is to be commended. However, only a minority of candidates were able to structure their piece successfully around a specific angle. Those who did present an angle tended to focus on the potential job losses and/or damage to Grange Feed rather than the fact that two firefighters were injured (...*if it bleeds, it leads*...).

- (b) The most successful answers were based on a clear recognition that the purpose of the newspaper article is very different from the purpose of the press release. Re-ordering the information is a key method in helping to ensure that the needs of the target readership are met and reduces the risk of presenting simply a summarised version of the ideas which still serve Teresa Smith's political agenda.

As with the other stimulus-based tasks, candidates who replicate the wording of the stimulus to a substantial degree cannot be rewarded. While the essence of the meaning will not change, candidates who crafted their own phrasing were able to access the upper mark bands.

Candidates are also reminded that this task does not ask for a *full* article – it requires a headline and the *first three paragraphs* only.

- Q3** This task prompted many excellent responses. The majority of candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of a feature article and were able to edit the length of the original piece with skill and precision. Weaker responses tended to delete the quotations from the experts or, retained the quotation but cut the name of the expert who provided the advice, thus revealing a lack of understanding as to the needs of the target readership.

The headlines were often humorous or light-hearted which was entirely appropriate for this publication, its target readership and the style of the original article.

As with last series, the understanding of what constitutes a caption remains varied across the candidature. There were many pull-quotes and/or additional headlines offered instead of a caption which is surprising given that caption-writing is a skill which is also required in the AS Unit 2 Print Portfolio.

The photograph selections were sensible in the main. 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.

## Section B

All three question options were approached.

Centres are urged to encourage candidates to research contemporary examples as they move through the Specification; examples to illustrate points of knowledge will be significantly rewarded. Researching specific examples will not only enrich the candidates' understanding of the theoretical elements which underpin journalistic practice, it will also equip candidates with the ability to evaluate how these elements are being dealt with by journalists today. The requirement to provide exemplification is made clear in the question paper's directive for Section B and candidates who do not provide examples to illustrate their points reduce the impact of their response.

Question 4 was a very popular choice and it was clear that many candidates were engaged with this aspect of the Specification. Overall, the Examining Team were impressed with the knowledge of candidates but disappointed with the lack of examples offered. Examples in this case were vital to illustrate candidates' understanding of the key legal issues. Some confusion was also evident as some responses lapsed into a discussion of *ethical* considerations rather than remaining focused on *legal* issues.

Question 5 was perhaps the most successfully addressed option as candidates were able to discuss differing news values and provide specific examples of publications which showcased various values.

Question 6 prompted a range of responses with varying degrees of success and accuracy. There were some very sophisticated answers which illustrated the *public interest defence* with contemporaneous examples; other responses were quite naïve, drawing examples from celebrity magazines and failing to recognise the subtleties of this legal defence.

## Principal Moderator's Report

The standard of work this year was encouraging with the full range of marks awarded. Some excellent work is being produced in centres. This shows evidence of quality teaching and learning. Candidates were clearly engaged and enthused by the course content and this allowed them to showcase their knowledge and skills.

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.

## Assessment Unit AS 2 Print Portfolio

This unit allows candidates to showcase their knowledge and understanding of journalistic concepts and gives them an opportunity 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.

Candidates have again, on the whole, demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding (Assessment Objective 1) in the Statement of Intentions. Centres are reminded that 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 in their statements of intentions. Centres are reminded that the Statement of Intentions should clarify the type of publication and demographic of the target readership. The vision for each piece, which encompasses the key concepts and contexts of print journalism should also be outlined.

There were some excellent Log books in evidence, however some centres' log books were in a diary schedule format. This format does not fulfil the extensive and rigorous sense of the planning needed to access the higher marks. The best log books were those which showed the thought processes and decision making process of the candidates. Log Book pages that show a wide range of primary and secondary research should be included as these will help candidates

achieve the top marks for planning and research. Log book pages should give an impression of the work undertaken for each portfolio piece, not just one or two pieces.

Again centres are reminded that QWC is a criteria for Assessment Objective 2 and therefore must be considered when awarding a mark. There were lapses in QWC in both the log book and portfolio pieces, which was disappointing; accurate QWC is a core skill within journalism.

The portfolio pieces again allowed some candidates to produce excellent work. However, in some centres candidates worked on similar pieces for some aspects of the portfolio which tended to produce weaker pieces. Stronger autonomy is advised among the students when choosing their issues for topical stories and features. Centres are again reminded that a magazine format is an option which may better suit some candidates' interests.

The evaluation was handled well by some candidates. It should be noted that the evaluation should take account of both strengths and weaknesses; and be accurate in their evaluation. Some candidates seem reluctant to draw attention to weaknesses.

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Assessment Unit A2 1 Cross-Platform Journalism and Digital Interactivity

In line with last year's AS numbers, there was a relatively small cohort for this first A2 level examination. Once again, the Examining Team were impressed by the journalistic skills which were demonstrated by candidates working within the examination structure, with a number of candidates excelling in producing industry grade news pieces despite the time constraints they were working under.

#### Section A

**Q1 (a) (i)** There are a number of challenges associated with this stimulus-based question. The word count is particularly important for the online platform and the majority of candidates created pieces which reflected a secure understanding of the concise nature of website publications. Less impressive however, was the substance of a number of responses. While quotations are an integral component of any news artefact, lengthy quotations should be avoided as this type of regurgitation cannot be rewarded. For example, responses which included the full quotations from the RNLI's press officer created a website article which was made up of over 100 words of quotation; in a task of 150 words this left little of the candidates' own work to credit. Candidates should be encouraged to practise the journalistic skills of prioritisation and selection in preparation for this task.

Another potential pitfall for candidates is presenting reported speech as a direct quotation – this should be avoided at all costs as it points to a basic misunderstanding of journalistic practice.

Finally, there was some evidence that a minority of candidates made use of the additional information provided for Part (b) of this task; while candidates were not penalised, the crafting of this information was not credited as the information would not have been available to the online journalist completing Task 1(a)(i).

- (ii) For the newsflash task, adhering to the word count given is extremely important. Writing less than the 50-word requirement contravenes the rubric of this task to the same extent as exceeding the word limit. Candidates who achieved the upper mark bands were able to fulfil the word count and create an appropriately conversational tone to this important announcement, showing a clear understanding of the listening audience.

- (b) The majority of candidates created fluent and engaging reports for this task with many demonstrating an astute understanding of the codes and conventions of a package script. Such typographical elements are not required but they certainly enhanced some of the scripts showing a thorough engagement with the role of a broadcast journalist.

The weaknesses which were noted above for Question 1(a)(i) were also seen in this task (i.e. laxity with the word count, use of quotations etc.). The most successful reports created a clear angle, carefully prioritising information with the audience firmly in mind. Less impressive responses remained rooted in a chronological recount of events.

Many of the responses to the various tasks of Question 1 would have been enhanced by greater QWC accuracy. Mis-spellings of names were noted by the Examining Team, along with grammatical errors and even a basic lack of paragraphing. Journalistic phrasing was also sadly lacking with many candidates referring to the “press officer” instead of the more appropriate “spokesman/spokesperson”.

- (c) This task gives candidates an opportunity to explain their decision-making process and recognise flaws in their artefacts (that cannot be amended because of the time-constraints imposed by the examination structure). Candidates should be aware that such flaws in their website article, newsflash and radio news package script are to be expected but they will be credited for acknowledging these weaknesses in Part (c) of this task. The cue to ‘evaluate’ invites candidates to judge their work based on its merits and faults. A merely descriptive treatment of their responses to Tasks (a) and (b) inevitably results in candidates struggling to get out of Mark Band 1.

**Q2** The time pressure associated with this question is immense but candidates demonstrated a superb ability to make intelligent selections from the news stories available. The news sense needed for making appropriate selections is a core journalistic skill and the Examining Team were very pleased with how candidates approached this aspect of the task.

The majority of candidates were also able to adhere to the 15 seconds time limit – however, a small number did misinterpret this as 15 seconds per story.

Overall, this question prompted excellent responses but could have been improved further by demonstrating a greater understanding of how to appeal to the listening audience in the limited time-frame allowed.

## Section B

The three essay question options proved to be equally popular. On the whole, candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the selected area of focus. It must be stressed however, that the inclusion of appropriate examples to illustrate points will be rewarded; a lack of exemplification limits the efficacy of the response. Examples from journalistic theory and the industry itself helps move responses beyond simple assertions.

The direction of “discuss” within each question option, invites candidates to offer a counter-argument; this also allows candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of a range of perspectives. Adopting a discursive approach thus enables candidates to secure marks from the upper mark bands.

There was some evidence of candidates trying to adapt the question set to one that they might have prepared in class. Relevant arguments/points can only be credited if they pertain to the question selected; chunks of information that show a lack of focus on the key terms of the question serve only to waste the candidates’ time in this section. The response time is quite brief (30 minutes) but the most successful candidates were able to produce two-page answers; those who produced lengthier responses tended to ‘off-load’ information that could not be credited as its relevance to the question was not clear.

## Principal Moderator’s Report

### Assessment Unit A2 2 Online Print and Broadcast Feature Portfolio

This unit provides candidates with the opportunity to produce a cross-platform feature portfolio containing both written and audio or video work. This enables candidates to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of the interactive digital landscape of print and broadcast journalism in their own research and practical work.

All folders were excellently presented with DVDs and USBs securely packaged. Some centres submitted the software needed to enable the viewing of the products this is considered excellent practice.

### Cross-Platform Research Case Study

Candidates clearly chose issues that were relevant and interesting to them, as a diverse range of topics were sampled. Nonetheless candidates should be encouraged to choose topics that are easily adaptable to the regional and local appeal needed in order to fulfil rubric of the tasks; autonomy is to be encouraged but centres are advised to ensure that case study topics allow for the adaptation of the topic to a regional and local readership.

The best case studies were those that were concise and eloquent in their analysis, which applied terminology fluently and effectively and utilised excellent QWC.

The word limit of the case study task is challenging but centres are reminded that concise and accurate analysis is a skill that must be in evidence at A2 level to achieve top band marks.

## Online Feature Portfolio

- (i) The better candidates were able to use their case study as a spring board for exploring their chosen theme in a regional context. Some candidates had difficulty adapting the chosen case study theme to appeal to regional target audience, while still maintaining and adhering to the conventions of a feature. The technical aspect of this task seemed to present the most difficulties for some centres. Centres are reminded that this should be a fully functional on-line web article with vox-pops fully embedded within the piece, which should work when clicked on. Centres need to take responsibility for this aspect of the task and ensure that candidates' work is fit for purpose.

In some centres the one minute requirement was not always fully adhered to with some vox-pops being significantly shorter.

The statement is an opportunity for candidates to be specific, it needs to address the candidates' individual pieces; rather than simply being generic statements about Facebook and Twitter.

- (ii) The majority of students opted for the radio package; these on the whole contained very interesting narratives but lacked the auditory appeal that is so important to radio and engages a radio audience. It was noted that where broadcast was chosen, the aesthetic appeal was more obvious and there was a stronger sense of purpose in the crafting of the product. Centres should ensure that the editing process is given ample time so that packages are as polished and professional as possible.

## Planning and Research

There were variations in the quality of the Log Books. The candidates who performed best were those candidates who demonstrated extensive research. The log book sample should consist of ten pages that showcases the range of research undertaken and should equally reflect the three main tasks. The best Log Books were those used as a working document and which demonstrated thought processes and justifications for decisions made by the candidate. The statement of intentions generally showed a clear sense of purpose in what the portfolio aimed to achieve.

## Evaluation

Candidates showed a promising ability to identify and acknowledge both the strengths and weaknesses of their own work. Weaker candidates tended to describe the process, what they did, rather than show awareness. The better candidates offered perceptive and insightful reflections on how to improve.

## Contact details

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