

CCEA GCE - Journalism in the Media
and Communications Industry
Summer Series 2016

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 significantly larger cohort this series and the full spectrum of ability levels was seen in an examination paper which was accessible to all levels. A range of skills was evidenced across Section A and Section B. Some very secure and confident responses reflected good work ongoing in classrooms.

Section A

- Q1** Overall, responses to this question represented an improvement on last year, with many candidates understanding the difference in the two articles' angles, and the most successful candidates analysing all aspects of the stimulus articles. Many candidates, however, described, rather than explained, features. The least successful candidates were prone to making sweeping generalisations which indicated an insecure understanding of journalistic writing. Candidates should be reminded that answers should be focused closely on the stimulus material.
- Q2 (a)** Several excellent responses were noted, with some candidates achieving a confident and appropriate style in their news stories. Many candidates selected a suitable angle and included the most newsworthy information. Pleasingly, the vast majority of candidates wrote in a non-sensationalised manner and avoided content which was legally problematic. Although attempts were clearly made to follow journalistic conventions, many candidates failed to cover the five Ws and H (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How) in their opening paragraphs. Common errors included failing to note the precise location of the events; and either failing to note or getting the time and date wrong. A poor quality of written communication undermined many stories, with quotations in particular being generally very poorly punctuated. Journalistic phrasing was also sadly lacking with many candidates referring to the "press officer" instead of the more appropriate "spokesman/spokesperson". It is highly recommended that candidates closely study and follow journalistic conventions.
- (b)** This task prompted a variety of responses. The most successful candidates accurately reported the relevant information and demonstrated a secure awareness of the publication and target audience. Strong answers prioritised the most newsworthy elements and crafted the stimulus into language appropriate for a newspaper story. Less successful responses included those which did not stick to the word count, over-sensationalised the headline or the story, or included out-of-date and irrelevant information (e.g. the road closures). As with the other stimulus-based tasks, candidates who replicate the wording of the stimulus to a substantial degree cannot be rewarded.

- Q3** This question prompted a wide variety of responses, with the lower and upper mark bands accessed. Several candidates composed excellent headlines for the news story. The examining team also noted an improvement on caption writing since last year, but candidates should be careful to ensure that the caption always reflects exactly what is shown in the picture. The re-ordering of paragraphs was generally successful, however several candidates inappropriately included paragraph one which was about Jamaica and irrelevant to a County Antrim publication. Closer reading of the stimulus material is advised.

Section B

All three question options were attempted, with Questions 4 and 6 proving the most popular. The most successful responses sustained a clear focus on the key terms of the question and provided relevant examples. Once again, centres are urged to encourage candidates to research up-to-date examples as they move through the specification. It is important to note that examples must be taken from journalism, rather than popular culture or literature etc. Equally, it should be noted that examples based in the British Isles tend to be much more successful. American law is different, and examples from the U.S. tended to be confused, poorly understood or explained, and thus unworthy of credit.

- Q4** Several candidates clearly demonstrated a secure grasp of defamation and its legal defences, which was very pleasing to note. Answers which combined secure knowledge and understanding with relevant examples accessed the upper mark band. In weaker responses, confusion abounded, for example many failed to understand the meaning of privilege or the difference between absolute and qualified privilege.
- Q5** Despite the importance of images and photography in newspaper journalism, with many examples and case studies available from UK news in recent years, very few candidates attempted this question.
- Q6** This question prompted some very good responses, with the most successful answers providing astute discussions of different perspectives about the positive and negative impacts of technology on print journalism. The history of handwritten manuscripts to print was noted by many candidates, but not always linked to journalism. Many candidates tended to over-focus on the negative aspects of technology with regard to print journalism, and several exaggerated the decline of newspaper journalism.

The cohort for this second A2 level examination was significantly larger than last year, and once again, the examining team was impressed by the journalistic skills demonstrated by candidates. A number of candidates managed to produce industry grade news pieces despite the time constraints they were working under.

Principal Moderator's Report

Some excellent work is being produced in all centres with the standard of work once again highlighting an engaged and enthusiastic range of quality teaching and learning. It is most encouraging to see that teachers are comfortable with awarding the full range of marks. A stronger level of candidature is beginning to emerge.

Teacher annotation proved very useful in the moderation process especially where comments highlighted aspects of the work that the teacher had given credit for. Most centres demonstrated accurate and consistent marking accompanied by detailed and insightful summative comments. This was helpful during the moderation process in clarifying how the mark scheme had been used. A few centres exercised some leniency in the awarding of marks; attendance at an Agreement Trial could help to alleviate this and assist in a more consistent application of marks across the whole cohort in the next summer series.

Most centres completed administrative elements diligently. The on-line E-Moderation system seemed to help centres with this 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 to put them into practice. As in the previous series, article selection was suitably varied allowing candidates to explore local issues that were of interest both to them and to their identified target audience. It was pleasing to see some centres had encouraged their students to choose the magazine option.

Candidates generally demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding (AO1) in the Statement of Intentions. Centres are reminded that succinct details in relation to audience demographic and the key concepts are required in the Statement of Intentions. A clear vision of the candidates' expectations for their folder is expected and top level students completed this excellently. It was clear however that many candidates completed this piece retrospectively and issues with QWC and tense confusion were thus apparent.

There were some excellent Log Books presented again this year, with a variety of approaches applied. Centres are evidently realising that rigorous and purposeful research and planning is needed to access the higher mark bands. The guidance given in relation to the specified pages for each piece was followed by most centres to the benefit of the candidates.

Again centres are reminded that QWC is a criterion for AO2 and therefore must be considered when awarding a mark. There were lapses again in QWC in both the Log Book and portfolio pieces, which were disappointing to note. Accurate QWC is a core journalistic skill and must therefore be consistently applied across the entire folder to access top marks.

The actual portfolio pieces again allowed many candidates to flourish and produce some excellent work. The best work tended to be seen in those centres that encouraged autonomy, guiding students to pursue issues they were genuinely interested in. Some centres confused the characteristics of a topical news story and a feature article which was disheartening to see. A few candidates in different centres used a sporting event to write a review on; this is not considered appropriate. A number of centres did not encourage adherence to the specified word counts. Access to the higher mark bands cannot be achieved in such instances.

Centres are again reminded that a magazine format is an option which may better suit some candidates' interests.

Evaluations were well performed by some candidates. It should be noted that the evaluation must address both strengths and weaknesses. Candidates this year again seemed reluctant to draw attention to weaknesses. Candidates should attempt to refer back to the aims and objectives from their Statement of Intentions to better inform their evaluation.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit A2 1 Cross-Platform Journalism and Digital Interactivity

Section A

- Q1 (a) (i)** A wide range of marks was awarded for this question. This year, there was less evidence of candidates merely presenting a chronological recount of events. Instead, many candidates demonstrated a secure selection and prioritisation of content (very few candidates, for example, included the unreliable Mary

O'Rourke as a source). Despite the challenges associated with this stimulus-based question, the content was generally handled well and the word count adhered to. However, centres should note that candidates who replicate the wording and structure of the stimulus cannot be rewarded for their use of language and style.

- (ii) For many candidates, the newsflash was the most successful element of Q1. Answers which achieved the upper mark bands were short, concise, informative and demonstrated a clear understanding of purpose and target audience.
- (b) Again, a wide variety of marks was awarded for this news package task. The strongest answers demonstrated an astute understanding of the codes and conventions of a package script. In other, less successful cases, candidates betrayed an insecure understanding of a radio package, which is concerning considering that creating a news package is an integral aspect of A2 coursework. Although quotations/clips are, of course, to be used, candidates should be aware that a response which is predominantly made up of quotations (and therefore not their own work) is difficult to reward. The package is equivalent to 80 seconds and those which provided approximately 60 seconds of clips were self-penalising.
- (c) In the evaluation, the most successful candidates offered explanations for the decisions made, gauging the strengths and weaknesses of their own work. Disappointingly, a number of candidates identified one piece as their weakest when in fact it was their strongest. 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. Students should be guided away from offering merely a descriptive treatment: diary style recounts cannot secure marks. References to the short time-frame/short word count hold little value as all of the candidature are faced with this challenge.

Q2 Answers to this question were generally good in terms of selection and prioritisation, with mostly valid stories being selected and several choosing the top story. A variety of combinations was offered which the examining team was open to.

Very few responses, however, showed an ability to appeal to the listening audience which is possible even within the short word count/time frame stipulated (e.g. “up next”, “in business news”, etc.).

Section B

All three essay questions were approached, with Question 3 and Question 5 proving the most popular. For all three choices, the full range of marks was accessed.

The most successful responses were those which directly answered the question and provided fully explained, relevant examples. 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. Some weaker and limited answers appeared to rely on a previous mark scheme or tried to adapt the question set to a pre-prepared essay.

Q3 While the concept of objectivity is clearly understood, some answers veered into an irrelevant discussion of journalistic or broadcast ethics in general. In several responses it was encouraging to see recent, up-to-date examples used to illustrate an argument.

- Q4** This question prompted some thoughtful and well-considered responses. In some instances, however, answers were characterised by information which was not directly related to the question or indeed to journalism. Many candidates referenced the 9p.m watershed which applies to entertainment programming, not generally to news programming.
- Q5** This question was answered extremely well in several cases, with the scope of the question allowing candidates to successfully discuss a wide range of issues - from legal constraints to photography - which affect editors. However, in some responses, a distortion of roles was noted, where journalists were frequently referred to rather than a focus on the roles and responsibilities of editors.

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.

This year, all folders were again excellently presented with DVDs and USBs securely packaged. Some centres submitted the software needed to enable the viewing of the products and this is considered excellent practice. It must be stressed however that while the on-line feature article is not required to be a live interactive website with working links, there is an expectation that it should be presented so as to demonstrate knowledge of presentation and formatting, including the positioning of the vox pops on the page, and the rolling nature of the story text, for example.

Cross-Platform Research Case Study

Candidates again chose issues that were relevant and interesting to them this year, as a diverse range of topics were sampled. It is still important that candidates choose topics that are easily adaptable to the regional and local appeal needed in order to fulfil the rubric of the tasks; autonomy is of course 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. Please note that it is not necessary for the case study and linked artefacts to be on precisely the same issue or story – but they must both be thematically linked.

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

The word limit of the case study task was not always adhered to and centres are reminded that concise and accurate analysis is a skill that must be in evidence for this piece to achieve top band marks.

Portfolio

(i) Online Feature

The strongest 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. Some candidates showed confusion regarding

the expectations of source material in a feature; access to higher grades is not possible without thoroughly researched primary source material.

The voxpops seemed to present the most difficulties for some centres. Centres are reminded that this one minute montage of public opinion should demonstrate a variety of 'voices' from the general public that enhances the appeal of their feature articles. A one minute interview with one person does not fulfil the requirements of this aspect of the task. The better and more appealing pieces tended to come from candidates who took to the streets and filmed a range of people, questioning them on their attitude towards the given topic. In some centres the one minute requirement was not always fully adhered to, with some vox-pops being significantly shorter.

The 100 word statement is an opportunity for candidates to be specific. It needs to address the candidates' individual pieces rather than simply making generic statements about FaceBook and Twitter.

(ii) 3 minute Package

The majority of students once again opted for the radio package. As in the previous series these were on the whole both appealing and interesting in terms of content, but did tend to lack the auditory qualities that are so important to radio when attempting to engage a radio audience. It was noted again, that where broadcast was chosen, the aesthetic appeal was immediately more obvious and there was a stronger sense of purpose in the crafting of the product. Centres should aim to ensure that the editing process is given ample time so that packages are as polished and professional as possible.

Planning and Research

The importance of planning and research continues to improve among the centres. While there were definite variations in the quality of Log Books, on the whole the consensus is that this aspect of the work is gaining momentum.

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 this year were again those used as a working document, demonstrating thought processes and justifications for decisions made by the candidate. Unlike AS, no guidance is offered on how many pages should be used for each piece therefore any purposeful and judicious reasoning in evidence was rewarded here.

Evaluation

Candidates showed a promising ability to identify and acknowledge both the strengths and weaknesses of their own work. Weaker candidates tended to describe what they did rather than show much awareness of the challenges in the processes they undertook. The better candidates offered perceptive and insightful reflections on how to improve. Centres are reminded that a high number of marks are available here and if possible should encourage candidates to genuinely reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of both process and product.

Contact details

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