

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report
**Journalism in the Media
and Communications
Industry**

Summer Series 2017



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 (AA1J1/SJR1)

This year's examination paper proved very accessible to all levels and allowed a range of strengths and skills to be demonstrated. The full spectrum of ability levels was evidenced in responses for both Section A and Section B. Responses in Section B were of a notably higher standard than in previous years, evidencing a growing familiarity with the subject and in particular its theoretical aspect. Some very secure and confident responses in Section B reflected a solid understanding of journalistic concepts.

Section A

- Q1** In the main, this question was handled well, with fewer generalisations of the kind that had characterised previous years. Language analysis saw an improvement on last year, however it should be noted that analysis of language within quotations cannot be credited. Several candidates failed to read the stimulus stating both the nature of publications and (for Article B) the target audience. This resulted in a number of candidates referring to Article A as a quality newspaper and Article B as a tabloid newspaper.
- Q2 (a)** This news writing task was handled confidently in the main and the vast majority of candidates wrote non-sensationalised stories with content that was legally sound. In many cases, however, there was a strong tendency to write in a narrative style, rather than prioritising information in an inverted pyramid form. In several cases, factual and spelling errors detracted from candidates' otherwise good responses. As with last year, several candidates failed to follow journalistic phrasing, for example quotations were poorly introduced and/or punctuated. Once again, it is highly recommended that in preparation for both Units 1 and 2, candidates closely study and follow journalistic conventions.
- (b)** This short news-writing task received a variety of responses. A variety of angles were chosen (e.g. the police appeal, or the rise in vandalism), all of which were deemed valid; and some strong answers very effectively selected and prioritised the information given. Headlines mostly reflected the chosen angles, but some were judged to be vague. Weaker responses included those which persistently repeated the wording of the stimulus, failed to adhere to the word count, or over-sensationalised the headline or the story. Candidates should be reminded that quality of written communication, including accurate spelling and punctuation, is important in all tasks.
- Q3** This question was generally well handled, with the vast majority of headlines and captions proving valid, and some of them very effective indeed. In a few instances, candidates wrote captions which bore little or no relation to the photo selection. Disappointingly, very few candidates managed to identify all 10 spelling errors. Some candidates attempted to correct punctuation or grammar, rather than spelling.

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. This year saw an increase in the number of up-to-date examples used, which was duly rewarded. Pleasingly, there were fewer instances this year of examples being taken from popular culture or literature.

- Q4** This question was attempted by many candidates, with varying degrees of success. The most successful responses demonstrated a secure grasp of the history and role of print journalism regulation in the UK. For example, many valid responses discussed the Leveson Inquiry and its aftermath, bringing it up to the present day. Answers which combined secure knowledge and understanding with relevant examples accessed the upper mark band. In weaker responses, there was evidence of confusion between regulation and law.
- Q5** This question was less popular, however the candidates that attempted it tended to do very well. Several excellent responses used a wide range of original examples to great effect.
- Q6** This question saw a wide range of responses. Successful answers detailed a range of ethical issues and provided astute examples to illustrate their points. The most impressive answers included analysis, discussion and critical judgement. However, a worrying number of responses persistently confused ethical and legal issues and demonstrated a lack of understanding throughout their responses.

Principal Moderator's Report

Across all centres some excellent work is being produced, showing clear evidence of quality teaching and engaged and enthusiastic learning. A stronger standard of work is emerging as the subject grows.

The majority of centres demonstrated accurate and consistent application of the mark scheme accompanied by detailed and insightful summative comments. Accurate teacher annotation proved very useful in the moderation process especially where comments highlighted specific aspects of the work that the teacher had given credit for and clarified how the mark scheme had been used. Although the full range of marks was awarded by many teachers, some centres exercised leniency in the awarding of marks: attendance at an Agreement Trial could help to alleviate this and assist a more consistent application of marks across the whole cohort in the next summer series.

Most centres completed administrative elements diligently. The online eModeration system worked well to ensure administration was processed smoothly.

Assessment Unit AS 2 Print Portfolio (AA1J2/SJR2)

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

In the Statement of Intentions candidates generally demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding (AO1) of print journalism concepts. The stronger statements set out a succinct outline for proposed portfolios and included details of audience demographics, news values, sources, technical formatting and legal and ethical considerations. It was clear, however, that many candidates completed this piece retrospectively and issues with QWC and tense confusion were thus apparent.

Some excellent log books once again impressed the moderation team this year. Rigorous and purposeful research and planning was in evidence across many centres, allowing candidates to access the higher mark bands for this aspect of their portfolio. 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 for AO2 (Planning and Research and Audience and Style) QWC is an important criterion 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 allowed many candidates to pursue different areas of interest and produce some excellent work. It was obvious that centres had encouraged autonomy amongst students, allowing them to focus on issues they were genuinely interested in. This was generally a very successful approach, however in some cases over enthusiasm led certain candidates to depart from the journalistic principles of objectivity and balance. A few candidates in different centres used a sporting event to write a review on; this is not considered appropriate. In the photomontage, several candidates failed to adhere to the conventions of captions and wrote paragraphs rather than succinct captions.

A number of candidates did not adhere to the specified word counts across the portfolio. 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. However, any candidates choosing the magazine option should be encouraged to thoroughly investigate the appropriate magazine conventions before embarking on their portfolio.

The moderation team were concerned to note a persistent confusion and lack of understanding around what constitutes a news story as opposed to a feature. In several cases, candidates' news stories read like features and in some cases, topics chosen for features would have been much more suited to a news story. Other newspaper conventions were also at times ignored, for example, by placing a feature on the front page. Equally, several candidates undermined their editorials by using the personal pronoun. This betrayed a misunderstanding of the purpose and conventions of newspaper editorials (or leaders) which are meant to express the newspaper's view, not the journalist's. In several cases, candidates inserted their own personal opinions into news stories, features and other aspects of the portfolio. Centres are strongly reminded that the only appropriate place in this portfolio for a journalist's opinion is the review.

Evaluations saw a range of marks being awarded, with the stronger evaluations addressing weaknesses as well as strengths. The less successful ones tended to be descriptive rather than evaluative of process and product. 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

The examining team was once again impressed by the journalistic skills demonstrated by candidates working within the examination structure. Despite the time constraints of the exam, many candidates produced lively and appropriate news pieces in Section A. Section B saw a clear improvement on last year, with a greater focus on the key terms of the questions, and greater evidence of discussion, analysis and relevant examples used to illustrate points.

Section A

- Q1 (a) (i)** A wide range of marks was awarded for this question. The content was generally handled well and the word count adhered to. In several cases, very engaging articles and suitable headlines were produced. Some weaker responses sensationalised the story or introduced potentially libellous content into the wording and phrasing of their headline. Over-reliance on the stimulus was another area of weakness. Candidates who replicate the wording and structure of the stimulus cannot be rewarded for their use of language and style.
- (ii)** This newsflash task demands secure selection and prioritisation of information, and the majority of candidates rose to the challenge. Many answers achieved the upper mark bands because they were short, concise, informative and showed clear awareness of the target audience. Any weaknesses stemmed from replicating the phrasing of the stimulus or clumsily referencing the Davery family in a way that could be libellous.
- (b)** Again, a wide variety of responses was seen in this radio news package task. The strongest answers adhered to the format and timing and showed astute selection and prioritisation of information. Some of the cues were very fluently written, leading to confident and engaging scripts. Weaker responses were those which took a chronological or narrative approach, or failed to edit quotations appropriately into clips. As stated last year, it is worth reminding candidates that long, unedited clips are self-penalising.
- Overall, a stronger grasp of what constitutes a news package was in evidence this year, however, it is clear that many candidates would benefit greatly from closely listening to and studying the conventions of radio news packages.
- (c)** Candidates' responses varied hugely in Question 1(c). The strongest evaluations were those which provided a methodical and thorough interrogation of why decisions had been taken and why elements had been included or omitted from their pieces. Weaker evaluations were descriptive and generic and failed to illustrate with examples from their work. The majority of responses focused on their 'strengths' but were less inclined to engage with 'weaknesses'. 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.

- Q2** This question was generally handled well. Due to political events which occurred shortly before the examination date, the examining team decided that stories 2, 3, 6 and 8 were all equally valid choices for the top story, while any of the above plus story 5 could be included in the top three. The majority of candidates selected from these choices and a variety of combinations was offered to which the examining team were open. Despite sound selection and prioritisation, it was disappointing that candidates' phrasing of their bulletins only rarely deviated from the stimulus.

Section B

All three essay questions were attempted, with Questions 3 and 5 proving the most popular. The strongest responses were those which responded to the invitation of the question to 'discuss' and offered counter-arguments and a range of perspectives. This year there was more evidence of this type of response than last year, and equally it was pleasing to note that examples tended to be more frequent, more relevant and more fully developed.

- Q3** This essay was a popular choice and prompted a substantial amount of relevant discussion and up-to-date examples. Citizen journalism was a common theme and was duly rewarded, while many candidates also successfully discussed the concept of ‘fake news’ and used recent examples to illustrate their argument. Some responses made generic comments about social media without providing explicit links to journalism or journalists, which could not be fully credited. Equally, examples varied in quality, and brief references to case-studies received less credit than fully-explained, detailed examples clearly linked to the question.
- Q4** Only a few candidates attempted this question. While the concept of representation was understood, answers tended to be characterized by confusion and failed to provide adequate or relevant examples appropriate to journalism. Some essays appeared to focus on other subjects than journalism, such as media studies or sociology.
- Q5** This question prompted some thoughtful and well-considered responses. The principle of privacy was understood and some relevant points of discussion, including scenarios such as door-stepping, were addressed. In several instances, however, answers were unfortunately characterised by a confusion between legal and ethical issues.

Principal Moderator’s Report

Assessment Unit A2 2 Online Print and Broadcast Feature Portfolio

This unit offers candidates a practical opportunity to produce a cross-platform feature portfolio. This portfolio should contain both written and audio or video work, which enables the candidate to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of an interactive digital landscape. Their own research and practical work will highlight their skill in print and broadcast journalism.

Once again, all folders were excellently presented with DVDs and USBs securely packaged. All centres submitted the software needed to enable the viewing of the products and this is considered excellent practice. It needs to be stressed again 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. A few centres did not adhere to this requirement with no indication as to where the vox pops would appear in the finished piece. Top mark bands cannot be accessed in such cases.

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 must be stressed 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.

It is strongly recommended that candidates identify the actual broadcast pieces and on-line articles they are using for analysis with time of broadcast/date clearly stated. This should be indicated on the case study and should not be counted in the overall word count.

Centres are reminded that the case study should be a balanced treatment of broadcast and on-line pieces and that the four key concepts – Language, Representation, Ownership and Audience – should be compared and contrasted throughout the work.

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

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 once again able to use their case study as a spring board for exploring their chosen theme in a regional context.

Some candidates experienced difficulties in adapting their chosen case study theme to appeal to a regional target audience, while still maintaining and adhering to the conventions of a feature. It is recommended that the initial theme and subsequent issue is thus chosen very carefully as some links this year were considered to be overly tenuous.

Some candidates are continuing to show confusion regarding the expectations of source material in a feature; access to higher mark bands remains impossible without thoroughly researched primary source material.

It was pleasing to note that most centres are becoming more confident in the creation of voxpops and the quality of the voxpops are improving. Centres who encouraged their candidates to film a variety of people across age ranges and gender and who used a variety of questions to garner different opinions were the most successful, which then enhanced the success of their features. Once again, the better and more appealing pieces tended to come from candidates who took to the streets and filmed while the less successful voxpops tended to centre on an audio recording of maybe just two people – often their classmates – answering one question. It would be helpful if centres encouraged their students to ask questions which invite a diverse range of views. 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. It was pleasing to note that some centres have been successful in trying to adapt the concept of digital technology to their specific issue. Some centres are still relying on overly generalised assertions which cannot access top marks.

(ii) 3 minute Package

It was very encouraging to note that more centres are opting for the broadcast option and this has accounted for stronger standards in most cases. Generally, the aesthetic appeal was more obvious and there was a stronger sense of purpose in the crafting of the product. A wide and varied range of local issues were presented in this packaged format and it served as an excellent medium for some very confident candidates. The better work came from genuine interviews which weren't scripted and footage taken by the candidate from the local area which added authenticity to the product.

Many students are still opting for the radio package. As in the previous series these were on the whole both appealing and interesting in terms of content, but some still tend to lack the auditory qualities that are so important to radio when attempting to engage a radio audience. It was noted however that some attempts have been made to improve on this.

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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