



General Certificate of Education

General Studies 1761 *Specification A*

GENA1 Culture and Society

Report on the Examination *2009 examination - January series*

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2009 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Unit 1 Section A

(GENA1 AS Culture and Society)

This component is an objective test for which the following list indicates the correct answers used in marking the candidates' responses.

1.1	B	1.16	D
1.2	B	1.17	B
1.3	C	1.18	B
1.4	A	1.19	A
1.5	D	1.20	A
1.6	D	1.21	A
1.7	A	1.22	B
1.8	D	1.23	D
1.9	B	1.24	C
1.10	A	1.25	D
1.11	D	1.26	C
1.12	D	1.27	A
1.13	C	1.28	C
1.14	D	1.29	A
1.15	C	1.30	B

Unit 1 Section A

Question 1

In this part of the first examination for the new specification the passage for comprehension and 25 of the 30 objective test questions were set in common with the legacy examination, and this provided a useful basis for comparison of standards.

Bearing in mind that the vast majority of candidates were sitting the examination very early into their post-16 careers, they performed well, although they did not score as highly as the candidates sitting the legacy version of the test, who were mostly a year older. Despite the relatively narrow focus of the passage on Young British Art, candidates appeared to understand and engage with the topic and questions reasonably successfully and the only apparent difficulties lay with understanding some of the vocabulary and references to the work of individual artists.

The average score was 17.7 out of 30 giving a mean facility of 59%, compared with 63% on the legacy specification, with males scoring marginally higher than females on both. Questions 9 and 10 proved to be the easiest by far whilst candidates found Questions 7, 13 and 28 difficult.

In Question 7 on the author's arguments in paragraph 4 only 30% opted for the key A, 24% for B, 16% for C and 30% for D. The author does not claim that disappointment is *inevitable* in artistic appreciation however, so the correct answer was A.

In Question 13 the meaning of 'pictorial inertia' was also problematic for the majority of candidates, as 44% opted for B (deceptively beautiful) and only 32% for the correct answer C (flat and lifeless).

Similarly in Question 28, where 47% of candidates opted to describe Tracey Emin's *My Bed* as A (abstract art) rather than the more specific and correct C (installation art) which was chosen by only 29%.

These questions discriminated well or at least satisfactorily, as did all the other items in the test, and it was clear that the stronger candidates had chosen the correct option in each case. Overall, the statistics indicated that this part of the examination was a fair and appropriate test of candidates' abilities.

Unit 1 Section B

General Comments

In general, the response of the majority of candidates to the written element of the examination was a positive one. The sources appeared to be accessible and the ideas and factual information contained within them were often deployed intelligently. Most candidates managed to organise their time effectively and to make a creditable attempt at all three questions.

Question 2(a)

Most candidates were able to identify at least two different reasons contained in the source for establishing a parliament exclusively for England, although occasionally there was an element of repetition. A number of candidates spent far too much time discussing the issue of university fees which, although mentioned in the source, was only cited as an example of how key issues could be decided on the votes of non-English MPs who were not directly affected by the decision. Some candidates were unsure of what to make of the reference to a hung parliament while, sadly, the weakest responses failed to score anything because the reasons they offered, although perhaps sensible, were not taken from the source.

Question 2(b)

This question was often poorly done. Responses relied entirely on the knowledge of candidates, a large number of whom obviously knew, or understood, very little about the principles and workings of devolution. Many candidates thought that the English parliament suggested in the source would simply replace the UK parliament at Westminster, which would cease to exist. Some candidates seemed somewhat hazy about what was meant by the term United Kingdom, and had no appreciation of just how large and economically powerful England is compared with the other parts of the UK. Better candidates, however, understood how the introduction of the proposed institution might lead to fragmentation of the UK, and even to an increased demand for regional assemblies in England. Those candidates who simply applied some common sense, and referred to the inevitable added bureaucracy and expense of an extra tier of government, were duly rewarded.

Questions 3 and 4, which demanded longer answers on both the source and personal knowledge, produced responses of three different kinds: the weakest came from those who could do little more than extract ideas from the source, often verbatim and with little understanding; better answers were able to use the source intelligently by extracting and developing ideas with some useful illustrations of their own; and, finally, the best responses were written by candidates who could not only use the source intelligently but also deploy fresh ideas from their own knowledge.

Question 3

The majority of candidates were able to use the statistics supplied in Source C to identify a declining turn-out in general elections and were able to recognise some reasons for this trend which appeared in the source. This process, however, tended to be the main, if not the only, focus for many candidates who concentrated on exploring why young people in particular failed to exercise the right to vote. Better candidates were able to range further picking up on references to voters' attitudes to politicians and offering some comment on the 'campaigning on single issues' referred to in the source. Only a small number of candidates had enough knowledge of Britain's electoral system to explain why, for instance, 'votes often made little difference in most constituencies'.

The scope of the question, with its emphasis on ‘a decline in public participation in British politics’, was intended to be a broad one but few candidates ventured beyond a discussion of participation in general elections. References to other types of election – local or European – were rare and only a few candidates understood that participation in politics could embrace a wide range of activities including active involvement not only in pressure groups (referred to indirectly in the source), but also in trade unions, community projects, consumer groups and even charities.

Question 4

This was, in general, the best answered with most candidates able to utilise the source to offer arguments both for retaining the monarchy and for its replacement. The majority of candidates recognised the fact that the source leaned heavily towards the idea of a republic with an elected president and were able to build on its anti-monarchy arguments. Not all candidates, however, understood the references to Britain’s class structure, and many were decidedly unsure about the role of an elected president. With the election of Barack Obama very much in the news as candidates sat the exam, many of them assumed, with obvious enthusiasm, that Britain as a republic would mirror the American model rather than – as would be more likely – a situation like in Italy where the president is more of a figurehead with a prime minister exercising most executive power.

Having said this, all but the weakest answers contained an element of balance as candidates were able to pick up on references to heritage and tradition in the source to offer some arguments in favour of keeping the monarchy. Many candidates pointed to the monarchy as being a key part of Britain’s national identity although not all candidates understood that Britain is by no means unique in retaining its monarchy. The monarchy was seen as a stabilising influence in a fast-changing world and, in its attraction to tourists, a sound investment to the taxpayer. The best answers came from candidates who understood something of the Queen’s powers and duties and had an appreciation of her ceremonial and diplomatic roles.

The question produced some interesting answers with some lively debate about the future of the monarchy.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.