



General Certificate of Education

General Studies 1761 *Specification A*

GENA2 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 2 Section A

(GENA2 AS Science 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 | A | 1.16 | D |
| 1.2 | D | 1.17 | A |
| 1.3 | B | 1.18 | C |
| 1.4 | C | 1.19 | D |
| 1.5 | A | 1.20 | B |
| 1.6 | D | 1.21 | B |
| 1.7 | A | 1.22 | B |
| 1.8 | C | 1.23 | B |
| 1.9 | D | 1.24 | D |
| 1.10 | C | 1.25 | B |
| 1.11 | B | 1.26 | B |
| 1.12 | D | 1.27 | A |
| 1.13 | B | 1.28 | C |
| 1.14 | B | 1.29 | C |
| 1.15 | A | 1.30 | A |

Unit 2 Section A

(Questions 1.1 – 1.30)

This passage proved to have a very similar demand to those from the equivalent section of the previous specification. The overall mean facility was 73% with only ten questions (1.6, 1.10, 1.13, 1.16, 1.19, 1.20, 1.21, 1.24, 1.27 and 1.30) having a facility less than 65%. All questions discriminated between the most and least able, even those with the highest facility, and many discriminated well. No question had a facility below 35% and no questions had any distractors being more popular than the correct response.

Notes on individual questions

Question 1.1: This proved to be a most accessible first question on the paper, as nearly 90% of candidates selected the correct response; the discrimination was still satisfactory however.

Question 1.6: Mathematical questions proved to be some of the more difficult on the paper. In this case many candidates selected a response from a ratio using 14 and 23 as given in the table for dilan, rather than using the figure of 77% which represented the decline over the given time period.

Question 1.8: Nearly three quarters of all candidates were able to select the correct response, with most of the remainder selecting A, realising the significance of the dots in the diagram, but not the length of the bar.

Question 1.10: The response here was similar to that in Question 1.6, for while approximately half of all candidates selected the correct response, nearly half of the remaining candidates selected option A in which no allowance had been made for the figure being the reduction in the shell thickness.

Question 1.11: In this question the vast majority of incorrect responses were for D, as these candidates failed to appreciate the significance of biomagnification.

Question 1.13: This question discriminated very well between the more and less able candidates, and while 44% overall were able to select the correct response, nearly as many candidates selected distractor A.

Question 1.21: This question had a facility of 53% and of the rest, the majority opted for response D. While many might feel that D is a reasonable response, it would not be in line with the precautionary principle, which should allow opportunities for scientists to do further work to obtain some more conclusive results.

Question 1.24: In this question most candidates could identify points 1 and 2 within the passage but from the responses candidates found points 3 and 4, which were also correct, harder to pick out.

Question 1.29: While nearly 70% of all candidates were able to select the correct response, most incorrect responses were for B, as candidates presumably drew an unreasonable conclusion regarding the USA from the information in +.

Unit 2 Section B

General Comments

This is a new specification which has only been available for teaching from September 2008. The candidates who were entered will therefore have had only a relatively short experience of the course.

The new specification covers both science and society and the examination questions all attempt to include both of these elements of the specification. All questions are in two parts, and the pattern of questions is that the first part focuses primarily on scientific issues, the second part focuses on social, economic, political or ethical issues related to the topic.

The questions include a short piece of source material, which is intended to act as a stimulus to candidates and which they may be able to refer to in their answers. However, the questions do not require source analysis, and candidates are expected to answer the questions using predominantly their own knowledge.

The distribution of answers varied significantly by centre. A sample of 150 papers showed a distribution as follows:

| Question 2 | Question 3 | Question 4 |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 31% | 16% | 53% |

Each part of the question was marked separately, with part (a) being allocated 17 marks, and part (b) being allocated 18 marks. Marks were allocated for content based on Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO3 and for communication based on Assessment Objective AO4. Examiners were encouraged to use the full mark range available.

The standard of entries varied enormously, with some answers a joy to read, but others of much poorer quality. While some lack of familiarity with a new specification is understandable, it was very disappointing and of real concern that many candidates appeared to have had very limited and certainly insufficient preparation for the demands of this new part of the test, which was distinctly different from its legacy forerunner.

The examiners felt that the optional topics were all standard and accessible themes which candidates might have been expected to come across in a General Studies discussion or course and that they offered a reasonable choice from the specification. Answers were generally too short and demonstrated too little range of knowledge and ideas. Weaker candidates could do little more than regurgitate points from the source in part (a) and sometimes just repeat this discussion in part (b). Many attempts also suggested that candidates had little idea of how to approach essay-type questions and needed more instruction and practice at writing extended answers to general questions.

Question 2

The source referred to the use of water transport by a supermarket chain as an alternative to other forms of freight transport. The first question asked candidates to consider the environmental advantages of the use of water transport. Most answers were able to make some level of appropriate response, though a more detailed account of the advantages of water would have helped improve marks. Answers which did little more than paraphrase the source did not score highly

Part (b) asked candidates to discuss social and economic issues associated with transport of freight by road, rail and air. Issues which could have been addressed included the speed and cost of the different forms of transport, questions of noise and congestion, and matters of flexibility and infrastructure. The best answers included discussion of all of these matters in a thoughtful and structured manner. Unfortunately, many candidates simply continued to discuss environmental matters generally rather than addressing the actual question.

Question 3

The source considered evidence (or lack of it) for dangers from the use of mobile phones and noted the different approaches to regulation in different countries. Part (a) was a general question about concerns over the use of mobile phones. Responses could have included not only reference to health concerns arising from the use of phones and masts, but wider issues about their use while driving, bullying, etc. The best answers did all of the above with detailed reference to the scientific background. Weaker answers did little beyond recycling the source, with no science content.

Part (b) widened the topic to consider the idea of a precautionary approach to new technological developments. Some answers contained very mature discussions on the need for scientists and politicians to be cautious in the application of new technologies, while also noting that much scientific and technological progress has been dependent on innovation and risk. Too many candidates, however, simply repeated points already made about mobile phones, with no wider perspective.

Question 4

The source for this question drew attention to health inequalities within the UK, and identified the social determinants of such inequalities. Part (a) asked candidates to explain the requirements for individual good health. Stronger candidates referred to diet, exercise and lifestyle choices, with the best answers including appropriate scientific detail. Weaker answers lacked both range and depth.

Part (b) required candidates to consider how the causes of health inequality, as mentioned in the source, might be tackled. Only a minority of candidates answered this part of the question in a structured manner focusing on health inequalities. Many answers considered more general health improvement issues, largely ignoring the social element of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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