



General Certificate of Education

General Studies 1761 *Specification A*

GENA1 AS Culture and Society

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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

Unit 1 Section A

Question 1

As with the first examination of the new specification in January 2009, the passage for comprehension and 25 out of the 30 objective test questions were set in common with the legacy examination. The performance of the two sets of candidates was very similar. Candidates appeared to engage with the passage on the reading habits of young people and coped well with most of the vocabulary and arguments used by the author.

Candidates for GENA1 scored a little more highly than those who sat the examination in January achieving an average score of 18.3 with a mean facility of 61% compared with figures of 17.4 and 58% in January. No questions were classed as difficult (with a mean facility below 35%), while 14 questions were classed as easy (with a mean facility of 65% and above).

The test discriminated well with a mean point biserial of 0.33. In only one instance – Q1.30 – did more candidates opt for a distractor over the key – 59% of candidates chose D as opposed to 38% who went for the right answer C. This question, however, like the vast majority did discriminate well. 3 questions discriminated less satisfactorily between candidates: Q1.1 where not all candidates could distinguish between the terms ‘ambiguous’ and ‘unequivocal’ used in the question; Q1.6 on the meaning of ‘canonical’ and Q1.12 targeting the author’s suggestions in paragraph 7.

The objective test component worked well appearing to be set at the right level of difficulty and with the capacity to separate candidates of different abilities.

Unit 1 Section B

General Comments

The majority of candidates responded positively to the written element of the paper. The theme of crime and punishment seemed to be within the compass of most candidates and average scores were marginally better than in the January examination. The sources, as a whole, were accessible to most candidates although weaker candidates did struggle with aspects of Source D. The vast majority of candidates managed their time effectively and attempted all four questions although some would have been well-advised to consider more carefully the marks allocated to each question and not, for example, spend a great deal of time on questions 2 and 3 at the expense of questions carrying much higher marks. Presentation was of variable quality but most candidates were able to communicate their ideas in a clear and direct manner.

Question 2

This question was often done well with about a third of candidates gaining full marks. Most were able to extract at least two criticisms of the government's anti-crime measures from Source B although there are still some candidates who insist on including ideas that are not in the source and for which they receive no credit at all. The best answers came from candidates who displayed some precision by focusing on criticisms of specific measures such as the creation of a DNA database rather than offering generalised comments like "these measures go too far". The opening paragraph of the source proved something of a distraction for some candidates who failed to see that the criticism cited was not of anti-crime measures but of Cabinet ministers' attitudes to their own privacy.

Question 3

This question, which required candidates to draw on their own knowledge, was done almost as well as the previous question with nearly 60% scoring 3 or 4 marks. Again, the best answers were clear in their reference to specific measures and avoided generalised comments like "these measures help catch criminals" or "these measures help to keep Britain safe". Similarly some candidates wrote in very broad terms about DNA technology rather than focusing on the police DNA data base referred to in Source B while some candidates confused the identity cards of the source with bank or credit cards. Overall, however, most candidates were able to offer an intelligent defence of the anti-crime measures under discussion.

Question 4

This question was often well done by candidates who could offer ideas of their own. It has to be said, however, that too many answers relied exclusively on information contained in Source C. Most candidates were able to use the source to make points for and against the prison system and could offer, as requested, some sort of opinion as to the effectiveness of prisons. Many candidates understood from the source that prisons had more than one function and commented accordingly. Only the better responses, however, understood the reference to the fifth of prison inmates who should not be there (they assumed them to be innocent) or could pick up on the political slant introduced at the end of the source.

As in January, what marked out the best candidates and gave them access to Level 3 in the marks scheme, was the ability to offer ideas of their own. Here, most were critical of prisons as "universities of crime" which destroyed families and institutionalised inmates. In general, by far the most common criticism of prisons was that they are "far too soft", but many weaker candidates spent far too much time outlining what they saw as the life of idle luxury enjoyed in

prison and who drifted into making vehement demands for harsher regimes and even the return of the death penalty. In fairness, however, most responses, although narrow, were quite thoughtful and balanced.

Question 5

This question certainly differentiated between candidates with the key to success – or failure – hinging on whether or not candidates understood the key words (liberal and punitive) used in the question. The weakest candidates, who appeared not to understand the specific demands of the question, simply wrote in the most general terms about what might cause crime and what might reduce it. They could extract ideas from what was a helpful Source D but could not attribute them to either the liberal or punitive side in the debate – accordingly they were awarded few, if any, marks.

Better candidates were able to identify relevant ideas but were unable to explain or develop them. Many candidates, for example, quoted the Tories as wishing to combat crime by promoting marriage and advocating a policy of zero tolerance without appearing to understand what the thinking was behind such ideas. Only the very best candidates were able to both utilise the source and introduce ideas of their own.

It was a complete absence of individual knowledge which was the main weakness in answers below Level 3. Some candidates, however, were able to use the source intelligently – they could see, for instance, that the new Prime Minister’s policy was a synthesis of both liberal and punitive ideas – and also employ it as a springboard for their own analysis introducing new areas for discussion like the impact of drugs, peer pressure, sentencing policy and human rights.

As ever the best responses to the more demanding Question 4 and 5 were clearly written, balanced and well-informed.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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