



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

General Studies A

GENA1

(Specification 2760)

Unit 1: Culture and Society (AS)

Report on the Examination

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

Unit 1 Section A

Question 1

The 30 multi-choice questions in this section were based on a passage entitled *Who needs the ICA?* which was essentially a review of the effectiveness or otherwise of the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Candidates appeared to find the passage clear and accessible and seemed able to engage with the topic and the questions. The mean mark was 17.3 giving a mean facility of 58% with males performing marginally better (59%) than females (57%). This performance was 2% better than the pre-test, much in line with expectations. These figures demonstrate that candidates found the test slightly more difficult than candidates in previous exams (the last four tests averaging a mean mark of 18.95 and a mean facility of 63%). None of the questions, however, were classed as difficult (with a facility below 30%) and only five were classed as easy (with a mean facility of more than 70%) and then only marginally so (these five had a mean facility of 74%).

This set of questions was able to discriminate admirably between the stronger and the weaker candidates with a mean biserial r of 0.40, the best performance of any of the tests to date. In no instance did more candidates opt for a distractor rather than for the correct answer.

All in all, the statistics indicate that this part of the exam was a fair and appropriate test of the abilities of the candidates.

Unit 1 Section B

General Comments

The majority of candidates responded positively to the written element of the paper. The theme of politics and society seemed to challenge students more than anticipated, with average scores being slightly lower than in the January examination. The sources, as a whole, were accessible to candidates. The vast majority 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 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. Some misunderstanding by students of clear instructions within the stem of two questions was a cause for concern. Evidence of essay planning for Questions 4 and 5 showed a slight improvement from the January examination.

Question 2

Generally this question was answered well with the majority of candidates able to select three relevant reasons from the source material why turnout at general elections within Britain is low. The best answers came from those whose answers focused solely on the identification of the three reasons. Some candidates opted to extend their explanations significantly, possibly compromising time available for other questions. A few candidates ignored the requirements of the question and responded from their own knowledge, thus gaining no marks.

Question 3

This question, which required candidates to draw on their own knowledge, was generally answered less well than in previous sessions. The best answers were clear in their explanation of measures that could be taken to increase the number of voters, with reference being made to compulsory voting, alternative voting methods, lowering the voting age and changes to the electoral system in line with the recent referendum on AV. Unfortunately a significant minority failed to recognise that this question was independent from Question 2 and attempted to integrate aspects of Source B into their responses, with many students attempting simply to reverse the criticisms contained within the printed source. Often this revealed a lack of understanding of the concepts stated. Many students appeared under the impression that “safe seats” were actually reserved for certain parties, or that individuals should be paid to vote or given the full day off work to participate in the election.

Question 4

This question was often answered well by those who were able to extend their own ideas alongside development of key points within the source. Higher order responses focused on interpreting the source in line with the political agenda present at the time (2007) and the government’s aspirations regarding a future general election. The forthcoming Olympic Games were also highlighted as a motivation or reason for presenting a united front to the world.

However, too often lower order responses were over-reliant on information contained within Source C. A significant number of candidates appeared to misunderstand the question confusing “anxious to” with “anxious about”, leading them to discuss the measures that the government may consider implementing rather than the reasoning behind the concern leading up to the review. Many students treated this as an opportunity to provide a biased view of aspects of immigration. Misunderstanding of ‘citizenship’ was very evident.

Question 5

Despite this being the final question responses were generally encouraging with the majority of candidates making a very positive attempt to complete their answers. The higher level candidates utilised the source material very well, alongside extended knowledge of their own, to exemplify their level of agreement with the idea of patriotism appearing increasingly outdated and narrow. These responses offered a clear idea of the concept of patriotism, often contrasted with nationalism, within a historical perspective. Comparisons with other countries, especially the USA, were developed with clear understanding. Aspects of globalisation and the importance of internationalism through such organisations as the UN, EU and NATO, were well developed. The complexity of living in a multicultural society where individual patriotic allegiance may be a cause for concern was often discussed in detail, especially the proposed swearing of an oath of allegiance. Clear understanding of the nature of Britain being a compound nation was shown, with relevant views on the differences of being British as opposed to English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh. The role of the Monarchy was also highlighted as a crucial aspect of patriotic allegiance within the British society. Conclusions about the outdated or narrow nature of patriotism were understandably quite mixed.

Lower order responses were heavily reliant on the text with patriotism often being interpreted in terms of sporting pride or loyalty to Britain within global competitions. However, misunderstanding of the key concept of Britain as an entity was too often confused with students focusing on England. Limited understanding of Britain's membership of the EU was evident. The majority did however, utilise the patriotic celebrations during the recent royal wedding as a developed point.

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

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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