



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

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

Unit 1 Section A

Question 1

The 30 multiple choice questions in this section of the examination were based on a passage entitled *Is the Renaissance scholar dead?* that took the form of two opposing views on the purpose of education put forward by two academics.

Candidates seemed to find the passage clear and accessible and the format of two distinct extracts appeared to present no particular problems. Candidates seemed to engage with the subject matter and the debate and produced a mean mark of 20 out of 30, an improvement on the 17 registered in June 2011, giving a mean facility of 66% as opposed to 58%. Candidates did find the test easier but this performance was more in line with the previous three tests which had a mean facility averaging 63%. Males performed slightly better than females (67% and 65% respectively).

Questions 7, 8, 11, 13 and 18 proved to be the easiest while, rather surprisingly, Question 12 proved the most difficult and the only question where more candidates opted for a distractor (D) rather than for the key (C). This set of questions was able to discriminate well between the stronger and the weaker candidates with a mean biserial r of .37.

Overall, the statistics indicate that this part of the examination was accessible to candidates and represented a fair and appropriate test of their abilities at AS level.

Unit 1 Section B

General Comments

The majority of candidates responded very positively to the written element of the paper. The theme of the internet and society seemed to be within the compass of all candidates and average scores were substantially higher than in the Summer 2011 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.

It is evident that a significant number of candidates at this level are unused to producing essay style answers in exam conditions. Too few are able to outline their understanding of the question terms, or of clear structure and balance leading to a conclusion. Those who did often followed a brief but prescribed plan and scored highly. Candidates scoring at the lower end of the attainment range too often depended upon simply rewriting details from the source or making unsupported assertions or generalisations, lacking detail or exemplification.

Question 2

Generally this question was answered well with the majority of candidates able to select from the source relevant ways by which politicians communicate with voters via the internet. The majority of candidates were able to identify and indicate clear understanding of three different methods; however, some confusion was evident in a minority who attempted to make their explanations significantly longer than the marks available warranted.

A very small minority of candidates ignored the requirements of the question and responded from their own knowledge, thus gaining no marks.

Question 3

Generally this question was answered well with the majority of candidates able to select three different ways by which politicians communicate with voters. The best responses came from those who identified and developed three clear methods presented in continuous prose, thus gaining full marks for both content and communication. Popular answers included appearances on popular shows such as Question Time, party political broadcasts, interviews on the radio, television or in the press, distribution of leaflets to householders, public appearances, charity work, party conferences and door-to-door calls.

A few answers referred to their own experience of a politician visiting their school or college to encourage participation by potential voters, or the issuing of 18th birthday cards to those newly eligible to vote. A minority of candidates were able to offer alternative internet-based methods not identified in Source B, such as the use of party websites or direct emailing. Lower level responses were often brief, poorly communicated and somewhat vague as a minority chose to present a very basic list of methods available.

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. However, too often some responses were over-reliant upon information contained within Source C. Lower level responses basically quoted sections from the source with very little or no development offered. However, Level 2 candidates were able to expand on the source evidence alongside ideas of

their own, for example parental blocks, privacy settings on social networking sites, education through ICT or citizenship lessons and software used by schools to block content.

Responses attaining Level 3 were able to question the possibility of total protection, given the scale and international scope of the internet, and to recognise that a combined approach with shared responsibility between parents, schools, popular website owners and legislators was likely to be most effective.

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 both the positive and negative issues. The majority of candidates were able to present some balance of positives and negatives but there was frequent over-reliance on the source, especially for the positives.

Responses within Level 1 were often one-sided and lacking in focus and detail. However, those progressing into Level 2 displayed a balanced approach with reasonable development of both source materials and own knowledge. Understanding of the range and capabilities of modern internet-based communication systems and their wider application both socially and within the business community was clearly understood. Level 3 candidates were able to extend their debate into wider perspectives, examining current environmentally, politically and economically related issues. Usually, such answers concluded that it was of enormous potential benefit to the well-intentioned but that the risks caused by the unscrupulous could not be ignored.

As ever the best responses to the more demanding Questions 4 and 5 were clearly written, balanced, sophisticated and well-informed. Some outstanding answers to these questions were seen.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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