



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

**General Studies B**

**GENB3**

**(Specification 2765)**

**Unit 3: Power**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **GENB3 Power**

### **General Comments**

There were very few candidates who attempted either fewer or more than the required questions, showing that the requirements of the paper are now more clearly understood by centres. The change in the rubric also seemed to help, with many more students providing examples of their own across all of the questions.

### **Questions 1 and 2 overview**

The need to provide a one-sided argument was much better understood than in previous sessions and very few either offered balanced or opposed arguments, which meant that marks for these questions were correspondingly improved, with fewer seen in Level 4 or Level 5. Weaker candidates did still rely wholly on the texts, which meant marks in Level 3, but there was some good analysis at times.

### **Question 1**

A number of candidates took their cue from Text A and provided examples of logos of their own as well as analysing those provided; Apple and various car and clothing companies featured. Images relating to charity appeals featured heavily and were often well exemplified and amplified.

There were some who produced quite narrow responses, dealing only with advertising, but better candidates, responding to Text B, delved into other news images with references to Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan and a number dealt with the image of “The Falling Man” from the Twin Towers. There was some good discussion of the Size Zero debate and of the impact of role models, who included Cheryl Cole, Wayne Rooney and Kerry Katona. History students used examples from Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and both World Wars to some effect.

Weaker responses relied on the texts and especially Text A. Some misunderstood the reference to “images” and talked about the poor personal image projected by some role models in terms of their life-style.

### **Question 2**

A little less well done than question 1, nevertheless, there were some very good responses. Candidates felt more secure with Text C than D and some made good use of Text B as well, developing this to cover more modern, digital fakes, including photoshop and airbrushing, with references to L’Oreal and Madonna as examples. Text C elicited some personal responses, positive and negative, although the emissions from a cooling tower were not always understood. Good use of Text D referred to the damage that installing such a pipeline was likely to involve; the impact on people and wildlife. Family photo-albums (“smile for the camera”) provided some good evidence as well. Historians were able to draw on war images, with one centre in particular very well-informed on Soviet use of footage from Eisenstein’s feature films as if they were reality. Sociologists and Business Studies students also drew on their knowledge of advertising and imagery, sometimes with over-lengthy descriptions of Marxist and functionalist interpretations.

Weaker responses tended to describe Text C, copied or paraphrased Will Self and ignored Text D. Some were side-tracked into a largely irrelevant, sometimes inaccurate, discussion or description of global warming.

### **Questions 3 and 4 overview**

The essay requiring a balanced response is clearly a format that candidates understand and with which they engage. Weaker candidates were unable to recognise the need for a two-sided debate in response to “How much...” and “How far...” and relied on assertions and opinion, which could result in Level 4 marks. Nevertheless, most were able to provide some examples of their own and to make use of one or more of the texts. Occasionally, especially in question 3, a variety of examples were given, but all making the same general point, which had the effect of keeping marks lower than they could have been. Candidates need to be encouraged to think in terms of arguments first with examples in a supporting role to try to avoid this.

### **Question 3**

More popular than question 4 (by about 4:1), this also attracted those who were less well-prepared. Weaker candidates wrote mainly about advertising and the media, taking their cue from the stem, and had little idea of what might constitute an “organisation”. Nevertheless, even weaker candidates showed some understanding of issues and, in a narrow response, might consider the impact of the media on themselves and others. However, the extent to which people are influenced did not rise above assertion at times.

Good examples provided by candidates ranged across Murdoch and Berlusconi, considered the influence of the government and organised religion and our ability to exercise our own free will. Well-balanced responses looked into various types of resistance to organisations, including strikes, historical and recent, with British Airways to the fore, and student opposition to tuition-fee rises. The internet was also well used to show its pervasive effects, especially on the young.

### **Question 4**

This question was less popular, but when it was done, it tended to be well done, by students who were well informed and able to draw material out of Text D and expand it with their own understanding and knowledge. The best came to reasoned conclusions and dealt with ethical issues surrounding wind farms and hydro-electric power as well as those relating to nuclear and fossil fuels.

A lot of candidates worked systematically through different energy types, the best analysing them in terms of the criteria: “diverse, ethical and reliable”, with ethical often not tackled in such an assured manner. Very good responses provided quite specific examples to support arguments, referring to local wind farms, offshore in Kent, or projects to harness tidal power in the Severn Estuary. There was some interesting knowledge on fusion and fission and the overall significance of nuclear power. NIMBYism was an area for some discussion as well as the visual and environmental impact of renewable energy sources. Carbon capture, referred to in Text D, was less well-understood.

Weaker candidates were more descriptive and ignored the three areas looked for, other than “diverse”, itself sometimes covered only by implication. Their responses were also often characterised by a weak or non-existent conclusion, often no more than a repetition of the points already made with no attempt to come to terms with the question: “How far is it possible..?”

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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