



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

General Studies B

GENB4

(Specification 2765)

Unit 4: Change

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 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.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

GENB4 Change

General

The best advice that can be given is, as it ever was: read the question first; if it provokes ideas, jot them down – and only then read the text or texts provided. Question 1 is based on Text A, and there is information in Text A on which a candidate can usefully draw; but this question is not a test of comprehension. Candidates are expected to bring their own experience and evidence to the question if they are to answer it satisfactorily.

The optional questions 2 and 3 are suggested by the texts provided, but they are not based on them. What holds for Question 1 holds doubly for Questions 2 and 3: if candidates cannot think of how they might answer their chosen question without reading the texts, the texts will not answer it for them. Only the slightest references to the texts are likely to be of any value.

Candidates whose centres have taken this message to heart score the highest marks.

Question 1

This was a question that asked whether ‘more education’ is needed in order to mitigate the shortage of ‘graduate’ jobs. Many, perhaps most, candidates took their cue from a reference to masters and PhD programmes in the text to infer that ‘more education’ meant more postgraduate education. It would have been equally valid to consider whether more of a different kind of education altogether might be in order, at the school level.

Probably the majority of candidates answered the question in the negative, and this was understandable in view of the picture painted in the text of ‘the reality of the jobs market’. Many picked up references to internships, voluntary work, and apprenticeships – rather few, interestingly, responded to David Willetts’ suggestion that graduates think seriously about ‘setting up as self-employed’. The most common refrain was: what we need is more jobs. There were those who thought it was the responsibility of the government to create them; and there were those who hoped that the return of ‘growth’ would do the trick.

There was much Gove-like talk of ‘Mickey-Mouse’ degrees that would lead nowhere; and, unsurprisingly, the fees issue gave rise to disapproving comment, and was blamed for the recently-announced drop in university applications. There was some indignation expressed (not without justification) that the relatively well-off who could afford to work for nothing for a while; who could fund ‘more education’; and who could, perhaps, exploit family connections – could drive past in the fast lane, whilst the less well-off would stall on the hard shoulder.

Some responsibility was placed on schools and universities to do more to advise students about career possibilities, and to assume rather less that further over-specialised courses were the answer. Stories were told, for instance, of friends and relations graduating with postgraduate degrees that equipped them only for yet more study, or for teaching others pursuing yet more study.

Whatever stance was taken, it was argumentative coherence and a candidate’s own ‘evidence’ that were rewarded, as always.

Question 2

About one third of candidates attempted this question: perhaps this was surprising – even gratifying – given that it was pitted against a ‘science and technology’ question.

Responses that earned the highest marks were those that interrogated the analogy of religion with art – that explored similarities and differences between the two domains. There were some artists referred to in Text B, but more credit than for citing these was given to examples of other work, in other periods, and other styles, in evidence of changing or abiding taste in art.

Candidates were rewarded who could then decide, and show, that religion – religious expression and affiliation – might have been, and might be, subject to the same sort of change. It was perfectly acceptable (because, clearly, there is no ‘right answer’ to a question of this sort) to argue that art and religion are not to be compared, in that art is a procession of –isms whereas religion is faith infused with eternal truths, and that, if it isn’t this, it is nothing. It was equally acceptable to maintain that art and religion ‘run deep’; and that both follow social-cultural fashion.

What was less acceptable was to sideline the taste issue altogether and to berate either art or religion for a supposed failure to engage the writer. It was no answer to the question to say: I am an atheist, so... (any more than it would have been to say: I can’t paint so...). The process of secularisation that we may be witness to in the UK (and elsewhere in Europe) would seem to be something more than a shift of taste; and the process would seem not to be observable in the USA, in Africa, or in the Middle East.

It is a complex and interesting question, and as open as the sky. For an answer to be convincing it needed to be grounded; it needed to be illustrated; and it needed to keep close hold of the term ‘taste’, in both contexts.

Question 3

Few candidates had difficulty illustrating their responses to this question, with examples of all that we have come to know in so many fields of science and technology – perhaps most notably in medicine; and with examples of all that we do not, and maybe cannot know: truths about the prehistoric and ancient past, about far galaxies, and about why people behave as they do.

It was not surprising – weighing such sets of examples in the balance – that candidates came to the conclusion that there is more that we do not know than that we do know.

It was impressive when candidates could give instances of the abuse of statistics; but perhaps it was even more impressive when candidates could argue that statistical measures are inherently approximate; that scientific methodology is subject to human error, bias, the dominant paradigm, funding pressures – all sorts of interpretation. Whilst this was not a question about scientific method exactly, it did help to raise marks when candidates could argue from principle, as well as from practice – when they recognised, for instance, that many ‘answers’ that scientists of all sorts come up with, raise a host of further questions.

Happily, most candidates understood that this was not a question about Britain’s woodland, or ethnicity and intelligence – that there was rather more to it than these two instances of legitimate disagreement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion