



General Certificate of Education

Communication and Culture

**COMM2 The Individual and Contemporary
Culture: Portfolio**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General

Portfolios

It is important to begin this report on the second year of this specification by celebrating the significant and demonstrable improvement in the quality of the work sampled. At this point it is important to recognise the achievements of teachers of this course whose enthusiasm and commitment to their students has contributed so much to the success of this Unit. It is clear that centres have paid close attention to 2009 moderator feedback and have made good use of the AQA Teacher Resource Bank. In addition, throughout the year, Teacher Support meetings have been well attended. These have proved to be lively and good humoured events which have provided opportunity for AQA to exemplify good practice and for delegates to raise issues which needed to be clarified. Moderators also reported on the efficiency of the submissions of Portfolios which, on the whole, were easy to access and sample. There were very few instances of inappropriate submissions, but centres are reminded to check the AQA website for the 2011 Site Topics.

However, as to be expected whilst this specification is still in its infancy, there remain issues which need to be addressed by centres. Firstly and importantly, centres are reminded that **Section B: Presentation** should not consist of filming candidates delivering PowerPoint presentations live to camera. Not only are these very difficult to moderate, but this format stifles the creativity of candidates in working with the possibilities of sound and vision. Instead, centres are asked to put the voice narration onto the PowerPoint. Secondly, centres are asked not to submit hand written or typed URL links for moderators to access candidate work. All submissions should be placed on disk or memory stick.

Section A: Readings

There was some very impressive work seen from a range of centres. Word limits were largely adhered to and titles of readings were much tighter. The suggested two-part formula for the Investigation worked particularly well in enabling candidates to focus on a specific and clearly defined area of enquiry. The new topic for this year, ***Clothes make the person: to what extent are we what we wear?*** proved a particularly popular choice, as did ***Good Taste/Bad Taste: in what ways are we defined by what we like?*** However, with the latter it did tend to become a catch all title to explore issues to do with body size etc as opposed to focusing on the key concept of value. Indeed close work with AS key concepts communicated in the discourse of Communication and Culture is the key to accessing high marks for both Assessment Objectives 1 and 3.

Centres are becoming more confident with addressing AO4. Some of the best work saw candidates using and integrating a wide range of source material in order to formulate and expand argument. However, a minority of centres are over rewarding this Assessment Objective. Moderators reported instances of Level 4 being given merely for the presence of a bibliography at the end of the Reading.

Don't forget the songs that saved your life: popular music as cultural communication and Retail Therapy? Explore the meanings of shopping were the most popular choices for the Exploration. Fewer candidates responded to ***In my room: personal places and their wider cultural significance***. Those that did were at their most effective when they made use of the semiotic toolkit to underpin their analysis and when they were able to engage with the broader cultural meanings of the rooms we inhabit in relation to power, representation and value.

Whilst there were some highly sophisticated and confident discussions of both shopping and popular music, some of the pitfalls identified last year remained in evidence. Some candidates offered band blogs or potted histories of particular music genres, which struggled to engage with the function and meanings of popular music within a cultural context. Similarly, Retail Therapy gave rise to explorations of advertising, media representation and the meanings of particular products rather than the shopping experience.

Centres who are experiencing difficulty in formulating appropriate titles for Readings are reminded that the exemplar titles on the AQA website and the use of Coursework Advisers are both provided by AQA to support them in this.

Section B: Presentation

Once again, there was some genuinely creative and highly engaging work which was a pleasure to moderate. The overall technical quality of the presentations has developed considerably. Teachers and candidates should be applauded for their hard work and commitment that has resulted in some really fascinating and at times very moving explorations of personal identity through audio-visual means. What was particularly encouraging was the increased number of candidates using voice over commentary or direct address to the camera, which reduced the need for text heavy content.

There was also evidence of candidates working more closely with two key concepts in their presentations, a requirement of the specification which was frequently overlooked in 2009. This helped to raise the quality of the argument presented and enabled higher levels of performance with AO3. However, there still remains some difficulties in establishing relevant titles and areas of focus. The requirements of this task are clearly outlined in the specification. ***The purpose of the presentation is to deal with the struggle between 'who we want to be and who we are allowed to be: the place where the personal and cultural meet.*** Work entitled ***Domestic Violence*** or ***Size Zero and the Fashion Industry*** do not easily allow the candidates to explore this struggle in relation to their own identity. Equally, however, ***British Culture and Me*** is far too broad to provide a tightly organised framework to shape argument.

Conclusion

In order to continue to build on this successful second year, AQA will continue to offer both Teacher Support and standardising meetings. We are also committed to developing our Teacher Resource Bank as a further vehicle for both developing and exemplifying good practice.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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