



General Certificate of Education

General Studies 1761 *Specification A*

GENA2 AS Culture and Society

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit 2 Section A

(GENA2 AS Science 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	A
1.2	B	1.17	C
1.3	B	1.18	B
1.4	D	1.19	A
1.5	C	1.20	A
1.6	C	1.21	D
1.7	A	1.22	C
1.8	B	1.23	C
1.9	B	1.24	C
1.10	C	1.25	B
1.11	C	1.26	A
1.12	D	1.27	B
1.13	B	1.28	A
1.14	B	1.29	B
1.15	D	1.30	D

Unit 2 Section A

(Questions 1.1 – 1.30)

As for the January examination the demands of this passage were very much in line with those from the broadly equivalent section of the previous specification.

On this occasion the overall facility was 66%.

Many questions had a facility of 65% or more; these were questions 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.14, 1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.19, 1.20, 1.21, 1.22, 1.23, 1.26 and 1.28.

Two questions (1.2 and 1.13) had a facility below 35%, and each of these had a distractor that proved to be more popular than the correct response. 1.13 discriminated well between candidates of different abilities whereas 1.2 was the only question which did not discriminate between stronger and weaker candidates as well as had been expected.

Notes on individual questions

The question with the lowest facility was 1.2, in which more than two thirds of candidates indicated they believed that greenhouse gases were responsible for all the problems listed.

While it would be dangerous to generalise with any confidence from one such question, it may indicate that there are still many students who cannot distinguish between the various environmental problems and their causes that affect our planet, such as climate change, global warming, the ozone hole and ozone layer, acid rain, CFCs, etc.

In question 1.9 the facility of male candidates was noticeably higher than the facility of female candidates (73% and 58% respectively), although the discrimination between stronger and weaker candidates was good for candidates of both genders.

Question 1.13 had the greatest difference between male and female performance, however, (42% to 26%) but both discriminated well between stronger and weaker candidates. The most popular response for female candidates was option C in which they failed to appreciate that producing energy from corn was still effective, even if only by as little as 10%.

The questions which proved most effective at distinguishing between stronger and weaker candidates were 1.6 (although 77% were able to indicate the correct response) and 1.11 (in which only just over half of candidates selected the correct response, each of the other options attracting roughly equal numbers of candidates).

Unit 2 Section B

General Comments

This is a new specification which has only been available for teaching from September 2008. A relatively small number of candidates entered the examination in January 2009, but this is the first occasion on which a substantial number of candidates have been entered.

The new specification covers both science and society and the examination questions all attempt to include both of these elements of the specification. All questions are in two parts, and the pattern of questions is that the first part focuses primarily on scientific issues while the second part focuses on social, economic, political or ethical issues related to the topic.

The questions include a short piece of source material, which is intended to act as a stimulus to candidates and which they may be able to refer to in their answers. However, the questions do not require source analysis, and candidates are expected to answer the questions using predominantly their own knowledge.

The distribution of answers was broadly similar in the majority of centres, with the following distribution across the whole of the entry:

Question 2/3	Question 4/5	Question 6/7
44%	43%	13%

Each part of the questions was marked separately, with the first parts being allocated 17 marks, and the second parts being allocated 18 marks. Marks were allocated for content based on Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO3 and for communication based on Assessment Objective AO4. Examiners were encouraged to use the full mark range available.

In general, examiners felt that the standard of responses was reasonable, though there was some variation from centre to centre. The better answers were well structured, with clear paragraphs, an introduction and conclusion, used relevant examples, and focused clearly on the actual question.

Marks for the second parts of the questions tended to be slightly higher than for the first parts. This seems to be associated with the fact that a higher level mark for the first parts requires some significant explanation of scientific principles and issues. Centres should ensure that candidates are fully aware of the need for scientific content in this part of the question, as well as the need for social, political and economic content in the second parts.

Question 2

Examiners were looking for an explanation of how houses might be designed to make them more environmentally sustainable. Most candidates were able to suggest a reasonable range of methods, including, for example, double-glazed windows, insulation, solar panels, etc. However, for too many this remained little more than a list, with only the better responses including explanations and development of the points made.

Question 3

The question invited discussion of the problems likely to be encountered in building sustainable new towns and altering existing properties to be more sustainable. The wording of the question gave a clear basis for structuring the answer. Most responses focused on potential new towns, rather than existing properties. They also tended to concentrate on environmental issues in the discussion, showing a more limited understanding of possible political and economic consequences.

Question 4

This question was looking for ways in which science and technology have assisted sporting achievement. Better answers included explanations of advances in materials, training techniques and understanding of diet. Some candidates demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of particular sports, while some referred to increased opportunities for athletes with disabilities. Poorer responses offered little beyond what was in the passage, with no development or explanation of the points made.

Question 5

This part of the question gave a fairly open-ended opportunity to consider the extent to which sport can be beneficial for individuals and society. It produced interesting and quite wide-ranging responses, both in respect of individuals (health, self-esteem, teamwork) and society (diversion from anti-social behaviour and crime, local and national pride). Better answers also considered the potentially negative effects on individuals (a sense of failure or exclusion) and society (an excessive reward culture, sporting violence).

Question 6

The expectation in this part of the question was for some explanation of the scientific principles involved in transplants. Answers tended to be very good or relatively weak – those with detailed knowledge of the biology scored highly, too many answers were vague and generalised. Strong responses were aware not only of, for example, heart transplants from deceased donors, but living donations of kidneys and liver sections.

Question 7

This question provided an opportunity for a potentially wide-ranging discussion of issues relating to the allocation of resources within the health service. Unfortunately, many candidates continued a fairly narrow consideration of issues relating to transplants. The wording also offered a clear structure for the answer, and many candidates were able to consider ethical issues relating to age and lifestyle, though fewer extended their consideration to more specific medical and economic concerns.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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