



## **Certificate of Education**

# **General Studies 2761**

## *Specification A*

**GENA3      Culture and Society**

# **Report on the Examination**

## *2010 examination - January series*

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2010 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.

## **(GENA3 A2 Culture and Society)**

There was a relatively large entry with a substantial proportion of Year 13 students. For a new paper it was accessible to candidates across the range and some very high marks were achieved. The rubric infringement whereby candidates answered more than one essay from a section seems to have disappeared on the new specification.

The vast majority of candidates seemed to have sufficient time to answer the whole paper. Very few appeared to have had to rush the final essay and the mean mark on Section C was higher than that of Section B. There is no reason why candidates should not answer the essays (worth more marks than section A) first. Some did this with evident freshness of approach.

### **Section A**

Questions 1 and 2 did throw up some problems for candidates.

In Question 1 the passages were relatively hard to analyse. Candidates were asked to compare and evaluate the arguments in the extract. It is important that they look at the command words here. Sometimes this question will require assessments of strengths and weaknesses; sometimes it will call for comparison and evaluation. In this case it took some teasing out of the issues and arguments and many candidates were content with a re-writing of the text without really evaluating what was being written, saying how the writers had reached their conclusions and without a real comparison of content and style.

Comparison is not simply looking at similarities – it involves an element of contrast too.

Question 1 produced some good answers which linked the class resentment caused by the economic crisis successfully with the rivalry between the 'oiks and aristocrats' of indie music. Less good answers failed to make the links, recognise the irony in Extract B or read into the text what wasn't there. Answers which could identify arguments and refer to provenance were relatively rare.

Question 2 was more straightforward. The quality of answers relied heavily on the use of appropriate illustrations. Some candidates were able to point to a range of examples from Billy Bragg to Live Aid and the G8 events. The support given by musicians to Barack Obama was also instanced accurately by some. Others were vague and assumed (possibly quite correctly but without supporting evidence) that bands and their fans were not political and therefore that the 'how far?' of the question was 'not very far at all!'

It is important that candidates are directed to the fact that question 2, although related to question 1, is not reliant upon it. Several candidates tried to answer this question using the opinions expressed in the extracts. They set themselves an unnecessarily difficult task. Candidates should also be aware of the mark allocation for section A. 20 marks in total is less than an essay in Sections B and C. There were instances of very long answers to question 1 (12 marks) and even longer attempts at question 2, which was worth only 8 marks.

## Section B

Comprised, as always, a choice of 1 from 4 essay titles. All questions received a good number of candidates, with fewer opting for question 4 than the others. The section covers the cultural themes of the specification content and requires knowledge, analysis, arguments, development, exemplification, illustration and communication. The valid conclusions that are required, should emerge from the strength of arguments contained within the essay.

Question 3 allowed a wide definition of art forms, though most limited their examples to conceptual art or fine arts. The best answers were balanced and well-illustrated and picked up the dilemmas and tensions between the rights and responsibilities of the artists they chose as illustrations. Many candidates took the acceptable line of ‘the public is not forced to encounter’ offensive material but took the issues no further. Some leapt at the opportunity to fulminate against the excessive absurdities they perceived as the preserve of modern artists.

Question 4 was not a very popular choice and rarely well done. Not enough focus was placed on the section of the question referring to ‘the lives of people in the UK’. A few wrote intelligently about the role of art and design in areas such as fashion, the built environment, interior design and advertising, as well as the production of modern style icons. Many candidates stressed the importance of art and design in people’s lives, but couldn’t say why they were important.

Question 5 on the relevance of art forms to young people did elicit some fine answers. We set something of a hostage to fortune in helping the candidates by suggesting some art forms which may be appropriate. This led to very few candidates looking any further, but it did lead to some structured answers where all three suggestions of poetry, theatre and classical music were examined. Some interesting attempts concentrated on the fusion or development of the art forms into modern cultural trends. Few seemed to realise that earlier generations than theirs also had ‘youth’ culture which may have had difficulties with poetry, theatre and classical music. Nevertheless some perceptive answers did point out that possibly more young people than ever are involved in youth theatre groups, youth orchestras and certainly admire poetry in the context of rapping or similar forms.

Question 6 was a popular question, in which, from the best candidates, clear philosophical, moral and ethical exemplification was offered along with the theories of a variety of philosophers and theologians. Focused pieces offered a well structured essay based on the dimensions offered in the question – time, place and circumstances. As usual many offered the 10 commandments as the western world’s unchanging moral and legislative framework but were very selective in their choices and forgot such issues as graven images, covetousness and taking the Lord’s name in vain.

## Section C

Also comprised 1 choice from 4, this time with a more social emphasis. All questions had a reasonable take up, though the discussion on the future of the monarchy was the least popular by some way.

Question 7 was about equality in the workplace. Too many candidates looked very literally at the prompt about child bearing and rearing and were unable to see other institutionalised issues preventing women from reaching the top. Little knowledge was shown of current legislation and there was some evidence of very simplistic and entrenched – almost misogynistic – views. There was a little too much at some levels of answer on Henry VIII, cavemen and Victorian authority figures. Conversely, many answers were able to argue from a variety of viewpoints –

women, employers, government, childless women and other perspectives. Little recognition was offered of childcare facilities, the role of fathers, the issues of single parents, modern work patterns, including working from home. Those who exemplified widely, developed the points they were making and showed real awareness of a variety of issues were rewarded highly.

### **Question 8**

Few candidates ventured beyond our example of Wikipedia, though many were eloquent on its shortcomings. A very few were able to suggest its dynamic nature was a virtue. The weakness was the understanding of the different nature of the content of a non-fiction book. Candidates saw such books as an unfailingly reliable source, compared to the unreliability of Wikipedia's contributors and there they stuck. The busy lifestyles of penurious modern students seem to preclude visits to libraries or the purchase of non-fiction texts. With the ready availability of the internet as a source of information, who can blame them? Little was made of the bewildering complexity and amount of information which web searches throw up and the difficulty of trawling for precisely the information that is required.

### **Question 9**

A balanced answer here would have been a good start on the way to the higher mark levels. There are two poles – presidency and monarchy – which need to be described, analysed and evaluated and then the invitation 'to what extent do you support this opinion?' gives the candidates free rein to choose where on the spectrum of opinion they have described, would their own position be. There were many misconceptions about the role of the monarchy and the extent of its powers. Little was offered about an elected presidency, and many only mentioned vague ideas of weaknesses in the hereditary principle and contrasted it with the tourist revenues. Many made reference to the uniqueness of Britain in having a monarchy, forgetting many other European monarchies in the process. Hardly anyone picked up on the timing implied by the question of 'after the reign of Queen Elizabeth II' – much ground for discussion here.

### **Question 10**

This was a popular question where again candidates could structure much of the answer by using the prompts in the question. The list we gave was rarely questioned or added to with other issues. Many simply said (sometimes at some length) school/college was not the place to address such issues; the home was. Some candidates were able to argue this with some development and exemplification and it came to be the root of some of the better essays when argued well. The main criticisms were reserved for a lack of education about money management and political education.

The writing of a good essay is an important skill which many students do not now meet at Post-16 level in other subjects. This report does contain some hints about what makes a good essay and how arguments should be structured. Some students have this skill to a highly creditable degree; others need to be taught how to convey their viewpoint with evidence and thoroughness.

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

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