



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

**General Studies A**

**GENA1**

**(Specification 2760)**

**Unit 1: Culture and Society (AS)**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Unit 1 Section A

### GENA1 AS Culture 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	A	1.16	C
1.2	C	1.17	D
1.3	B	1.18	A
1.4	C	1.19	B
1.5	B	1.20	C
1.6	A	1.21	A
1.7	B	1.22	B
1.8	A	1.23	D
1.9	D	1.24	B
1.10	D	1.25	B
1.11	B	1.26	C
1.12	A	1.27	C
1.13	B	1.28	C
1.14	A	1.29	B
1.15	D	1.30	A

## Unit 1 Section A

### Question 1

The 30 questions in this section of the examination were based on a passage entitled *Being British: Can you teach it?*

Candidates seemed to find the passage accessible and the test produced a mean mark of 20 out of 30, giving a mean facility of 66%. This was almost identical to the performance of students in January 2012, as was the difference of 2% between the performance of male and female students (males 67%, females 65%). No questions were classed as difficult (a mean facility of 35% or lower) and there were no questions with notable distractors. The test proved easier than last summer's (mean facility of 58%), but was very much in line with the previous four tests which had an average mean facility of 64%.

The set of questions appeared to discriminate well between the stronger and the weaker students with a mean biserial  $r$  of .37, the same as the figure for January 2012 and only marginally lower than the .40 of June 2011.

Overall, the statistics indicate that the objective test component of the examination performed well and provided an equitable and appropriate test of the students' abilities.

## Unit 1 Section B

### General Comments

The majority of candidates responded very positively to the written element of the paper. The themes of soap operas and TV censorship seemed to be within the compass of all students and average scores were similar to the January 2012 examination. The sources, as a whole, were accessible and the vast majority of students managed their time effectively and attempted all four questions, although some would have been well-advised to consider more carefully the marks allocated to each question and not spend too much time on Questions 2 and 3 at the expense of Questions 4 and 5 which carry much higher marks.

It is evident that a significant number of students at this level are unused to producing answers in exam conditions that require some extended writing. Too few are able to outline their understanding of all the question's terms, or of providing clear structure and balance leading to a conclusion. Those who did often followed a brief but prescribed plan and scored highly. Students scoring at the lower end of the attainment range too often depended upon simply rewriting details from the source or making unsupported assertions or generalisations, lacking detail or exemplification.

Presentation, whilst generally excellent, remains a concern for the minority of students whose handwriting is very difficult to read. Many centres seek appropriate guidance from AQA to rectify this situation but more could take advantage of the support facilities that AQA can make available in certain cases.

### Question 2

Generally this question was answered well, with the majority of students able to select from the source relevant reasons why TV soaps may be criticised. The majority of students were able to identify and indicate clear understanding of three different reasons; however, some confusion was evident in a minority who attempted to make their explanations significantly longer than the marks available warranted.

A very small minority of students ignored the requirements of the question and responded from their own knowledge, thus gaining no marks.

### Question 3

Generally this question was answered well with the majority of students able to select three different ways in which soaps, rather than TV dramas, do not reflect real life. The best responses came from those who identified and developed three clear ways and presented them in continuous prose, thus gaining full marks for both content and communication. Popular answers included the high frequency of dramatic events occurring in one place and to the same people, the tight-knit community where everyone knows each other and the frequent attendance at set meeting places.

Unfortunately, a significant number of students continue to answer briefly, often in bullet-point format, thus failing to attract the additional communication marks that are available.

### Question 4

This question was often answered well by those who were able to extend their own ideas alongside development of key points within the source regarding the continuing appeal of soap operas. However, too often some responses were over-reliant upon information

contained within Source C. Lower level responses basically quoted sections from the source with very little or no development. However, Level 2 students were able to expand on the source evidence alongside ideas of their own, for example: soaps having prime time slots, availability of catch-up via new technology, conversation topics, family tradition and the selected use of high drama storylines, thus attaining mid to high Level 2 marks.

Responses attaining Level 3 were able to develop a range of points and offer specific examples to illustrate their ideas, perhaps concluding with those factors they considered to be the most important in explaining the continued dominance of soaps.

### **Question 5**

Despite this being the final question, responses were generally encouraging with the majority of students making a very positive attempt to complete their answers. The higher level students utilised the source material very well alongside extended knowledge of their own to exemplify both the positive and negative issues of TV censorship. The majority of students were able to present some balance of positives and negatives but there was frequent over-reliance on the source, often with opinions expressed on the Eastenders and Frankie Boyle incidents, with insufficient reference to the wider issue of television censorship or anything outside of soaps.

Some students seem unaware that there are currently any broadcasting restrictions, whilst better answers discussed the watershed, Ofcom and self-regulation, freedom of speech, parental responsibility and the availability of the “off” switch! A surprising number of well-written and wide-ranging pieces did not refer to any specifics beyond the examples given in the source and thus found it difficult to improve on Level 2 marks.

Responses within Level 1 were often one-sided and lacking in focus and detail, simply lifting a few basic points from the source. However, those progressing into Level 2 displayed a balanced approach with reasonable development of both sides of the issue, offering a range of points with some development and explanation alongside an “extent” conclusion.

Level 3 students were able to consider carefully the issue of television censorship and to offer a range of points and examples to assess the extent of its merits. The complexity of censorship within our modern, ever changing national/international community was clearly understood.

As ever the best responses to the more demanding Questions 4 and 5 were clearly written, balanced, sophisticated and well-informed. Some outstanding answers to these questions were seen.

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

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **results statistics** page of the AQA Website - <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>

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