



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2011**

**General Studies B**

**GENB3**

**(Specification 2765)**

**Unit 3: Power**

***Report on the Examination***

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## GENB3 Power

### General Comments

Candidates responded well to the paper and most were able to complete the compulsory elements, Questions 1 and 2, as well as an essay selected from Questions 3 and 4 in the allotted time. Of the two questions where candidates had a choice, Question 3 on Equal Opportunities proved more popular than Question 4 on Health, although the latter had a lot of prompts available in Texts A, B and D to enable those who chose to do it to develop ideas and arguments of their own. The change to the instructions on the paper first used in January 2010 again seemed to help candidates as they provided examples to support their case in all questions; far fewer than in previous series relied wholly on the texts.

### Questions 1 and 2

The requirement here is that candidates argue the case from the perspective they are given, creating a one-sided response. Balance is not a requirement of these two questions and although responses that do provide points on the opposite side, arguing in Question 1 that we do *not* have the freedom to act as we please, for example, are not penalised, candidates tend to penalise themselves by leaving less time to develop their valid arguments and ideas.

Personal examples came from a variety of areas, but candidates should be aware that at times a different example may not actually be making a different point and that they should plan responses to ensure that different ideas relevant to the question are being developed.

Question 1 was well done, with candidates arguing that ‘free will’ enabled individuals to choose how they lived their lives. Good examples came from Philosophy, Religious Studies, English Literature and Law, as well as other subjects, with many able candidates covering a range of areas of life where the individual has choice. Text A was generally well used and lifestyle choices were developed to good effect as candidates considered obesity, fitness and diet. Text B was a little less well appreciated, although good candidates recognised the distinction between advice and orders and that the new influences on our lives have no more power to control than that allowed by individuals.

Question 2 caused a few candidates to focus on “reference” without seeing the issue of how we are all members of society. This question saw more candidates relying on the texts, and weaker responses did not discriminate, relating the issues around sentencing from Text C at length, or describing various disasters other than that in Haiti. Better responses drew on the idea of the different societies of which we are all members and how we cannot evade involvement with others. A variety of types of society were explored, including some very good personal examples of candidates’ involvements with school teams and societies and even involvement with various online sites. Although *Twitter* and *Facebook* were obvious examples a few interesting responses were based on sites that provide advice and support for a variety of matters, including university applications and exam revision.

### Questions 3 and 4

Candidates remain more comfortable, on the whole, with producing an essay that allows them to argue for and against a point and then coming to a conclusion of their own. Equal Opportunities attracted more responses than Health, but this question also highlighted an

issue that arises frequently. Some candidates allow their own moral outrage over an issue to dominate and take over their response, so that it becomes a very personal response, often not rising above assertion and scoring a lower mark as a result. A number of scripts were seen that would have been awarded much higher marks with the same material had it been better controlled by the candidate and arguments developed rather than opinions expressed. For the top marks, candidates do need to write a conclusion and this should do more than just reiterate the points made, considering and balancing the previous evidence to argue a case.

Better candidates approached Question 3 with a response that integrated points for and against the issue of equal opportunities. The stem provided a good start for many, but the best candidates moved beyond the four areas mentioned to consider geographical, environmental and political factors. There was ample evidence in Texts C and D to encourage this approach. Examples were often drawn from the Law, but candidates were also able to make good use of events in North Africa and the Middle East. Predictably, the rise in tuition fees exercised many, with weaker responses often going in to over-lengthy considerations of how unfair this was, whilst paying only lip-service to any contrast with educational opportunities elsewhere, usually in “countries like Africa”.

Education did provide a focus for many responses and, despite numerous examples, sometimes personal, often concerning the educational background of the current cabinet, marks were often low, reflecting the narrowness of the discussion. A lot of candidates were well informed on the Civil Rights movement in America, usually knowing more about developments there than in Europe or even the UK.

Question 4 gave candidates an opportunity to write from a personal or a world perspective. There was a lot on diet and exercise, not unsurprisingly given the texts and government priorities in this area. Weaker responses had a focus only on those areas within the control of the individual, whilst better informed candidates were able to discuss specific conditions and diseases related to inheritance and environment, with some detailed and sometimes personal examples around work-related conditions, where one is born and the likelihood of developing various cancers. A lot of candidates drew on knowledge of smoking, alcohol, drugs and safe sex, suggesting that education in these areas is having some impact on understanding.

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