



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

General Studies 47601

(Specification 4760)

Unit 1: Case Study

Report on the Examination

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GCSE General Studies

UNIT 1 Case Study

Question 1

This question required candidates to explain two points from Source 1. The majority of candidates identified two points; answers then fell clearly into two halves. Some candidates stopped at merely identifying the two points and so scored 1 or 2 marks out of a possible 4 marks. Better candidates went on to explain the points that they had selected and achieved 3 or 4 marks.

The skill of explaining, in addition to the ability to identify, was being assessed through this question.

Question 2

This was a more complex question with a built in cross-referencing element.

Weaker responses tended to list isolated points and make simple comments such as “people can steal your details”. Such answers stayed in band 1 of the mark scheme and were awarded 1 or 2 marks.

The majority of answers fell into the middle mark band (3 or 4 marks) and contained some development of points lifted directly from the sources. If conclusions were drawn they tended to be quite basic and often linked directly to a point found in the source documents.

Answers which demonstrated clear cross-referencing, well developed points and detailed conclusions were awarded marks in the top mark band (5 or 6 marks).

More than 50% of candidates scored 3 or 4 on this question. With a little extra organisation some of those who scored 4 could have moved into the top mark band. (See general comments re skills at the end of this report.)

Question 3

This question invited an open ended piece of writing about people choosing to live life online. Answers largely fell into the following mark scheme categories:

1 – 2 marks

Simple selection of material – some basic conclusions, though these were often in the sources too. There was no real evidence of clearly formed personal views at this level. Because the question allowed personal views, less able candidates tended to write about entirely personal situations such as their own facebook accounts.

3 – 4 marks

Summary of the sources – usually in numerical order of source – interspersed with brief statements of personal views. There were often anecdotal references to uses of technology which were outside the sources but these rarely approached true research.

In this range there was very little evidence of any additional material being used. In order to progress beyond 6 marks candidates really need to refer to some own research. As the case study sources booklet is released well in advance of the examination it is expected that some research will be undertaken.

5 – 6 marks

With detailed cross-references and clearly supported own views some candidates moved into this mark range. Very few candidates presented any factual information outside the sources. Given the amount of time available between the release of the source booklet and the examination this was disappointing.

There was often detailed opinion expressed and some candidates had clearly considered key issues but there was a general failure to support such opinion.

7 – 10 marks

A small number of answers (just over 10%) fell into this range. For marks in the highest range candidates need to:

- show clear evidence of own research – not merely own opinion
- demonstrate the ability to analyse sources as opposed to simply summarising them

The strongest answers contained careful reflection on the nature of online worlds and the ways that human beings interacted with them. Comments were supported by examples and writing was fluent.

Question 3 is in effect a short essay and more familiarity with essay writing skills would serve many candidates well. An answer consisting of a strong opening, clearly developed and well supported arguments and definite conclusions is likely to score more highly than a source by source summary.

It is a requirement of the mark scheme that for answers to score above 6 marks they should include some additional personal research.

Question 4

This was an essay question worth 20 marks. Candidates were asked to refer to all of the sources and to use their own knowledge.

Answers that reached level 1 and level 2 on the mark scheme were very similar to the corresponding Question 3 answers and relied on simple statements with occasional support from either the sources, personal experience or both. Just over 40% of answers fell into the two lower bands of the mark scheme.

The most frequently awarded marks were in band 3 (9 – 12 marks) with 10 marks being the most frequent. In all, 36% of the marks were awarded in band 3 alone.

Answers in band 3 tended to follow the sources in order and to include comments in turn about each source. There was usually a clear conclusion, though this was often relatively unsophisticated e.g. "I think it will have a bad effect because people will not go outside any more."

The responses very often took the form of a commentary upon the sources with personal views but there was little real analysis of the more complex points found in the sources, such as the blurring of boundaries between fantasy and reality and the lack of real human interaction that using sites such as Second Life could lead to.

13 – 16 marks

Answers in this mark range began to show increasing levels of detailed analysis and more sophisticated conclusions. In all, 17% of marks were awarded in this Level 4 mark band.

Candidates demonstrated analytical skills and the ability to cross-reference and to select supporting material. There were still very few who had carried out any real independent research, relying on a discussion of their personal interactions with social networking sites instead.

17 – 20 marks

Just over 2% of answers were awarded marks in this mark range, quite possibly because very few candidates had carried out additional research. The few answers that were seen at this level were sophisticated, fluent and thorough and dealt with the wider social consequences of online communication. The ability to take the particular issues found in the sources and relate them to the more general state of society was usual among candidates in this range.

General Comments – Skills for Unit 1

Unit 1 is based on a pre-release booklet which is made available to candidates approximately 3 months in advance of the examination. (The actual topic/title of the case study is published 2 years preceding the examination in the Specification and in *Examinations Update*). For this reason, basic comprehension skills will not score candidates many marks. Candidates who score below 10 marks tended to treat the questions as a comprehension test and simply addressed the sources in turn. It is expected that teachers will have worked on the sources with candidates and that additional research will have been carried out.

The mark scheme is structured so that questions make demands on different levels of response. These demands increase question by question as shown in the mark scheme grid. Question 1 requires only the basic skills of levels 1 to 2, whereas Question 5 allows candidates to respond across levels 1 to 5. If candidates treat the paper as a basic comprehension exercise then answers are likely to reach level 3 at best, meaning that a significant number of marks on Question 3 and Question 4 will never be accessed.

Teachers should consider the skills asked for on the longer questions and perhaps devote some time to helping candidates grasp what these skills are and how best to apply them to the material found in the source documents.

For the very highest marks there has always been, and continues to be, the need for some additional research. This does not need to be lengthy but should come from outside the sources and not simply be personal opinion. For example, many candidates referred to facebook in their answers but examiners did not report one single instance of statistics about the number of facebook users. This would not have been a difficult figure to obtain and would have shown that there was some work going on beyond the sources.

It would be beneficial to candidates if teachers were to work through the sources with them and also to suggest likely areas for further research. Candidates should make it clear that a point they are introducing into their answers is from extra personal research and state where such information has come from.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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