



General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Examination
January 2012

General Studies (Specification A)

GENA1

Unit 1 AS Culture and Society

Source Booklet

Sources for use with **Questions 1.1 to 1.30** and **Questions 2 to 5**.

Section A**Source A for Questions 1.1 to 1.30**

Is the Renaissance scholar dead?**Yes: the case for**

- (1) What do we know about the world since the Renaissance? Almost every single forward movement in advancing the position of humankind has come from science, technology and business. Where will the advances that take us forward in this century come from? Will they emerge from study of the 19th century novel, or from being able to translate Herodotus from ancient Greek, or from theology? (What do you think?). You know the answer, and yet we currently subsidise 30% of our undergraduates to study these subjects in universities. Are we nuts?
- (2) We're producing graduates who, far from being Renaissance scholars, wouldn't be able to figure out a problem posed by a Renaissance mathematician. A university system that allows people to indulge in academic entertainment and then awards them a degree doesn't deserve public money.
- (3) So what should we do about it? The employment market has already discounted degrees that aren't relevant to business. Male arts graduates can expect to be worse off over their lifetime after paying for the kind of knowledge the economy doesn't care about. Do we need another government initiative for this to sink in? Or do we need prospective students to wake up and smell the coffee on job prospects before they end up brewing it for a living?
- (4) I'm not suggesting that universities open departments in fast-food studies or call-centre etiquette. Far from it. Education in subjects that will boost the economy doesn't need to mean students ordering from a menu provided by employers who use universities as their training departments. Instead it means giving graduates the ability to excel in the subjects we know will feed an information-based, technology-driven global economy. We may not know exactly what those are but we can be damn sure they are not liberal arts and humanities subjects.
- (5) If you don't believe me, a history graduate, then take the word of Netscape founder Marc Andreessen: "Graduating with a technical degree is like heading out into the real world armed with an assault rifle instead of a blunt knife. Don't miss that opportunity because of some fuzzy romanticised view of liberal arts broadening your horizons." Andreessen is right. Even in a field like mine, journalism, the future is being shaped by graduates who have developed programming languages and websites that put information together in ways traditional news providers could never dream of.
- (6) And yet, all too often, universities are happy to pile on vocational-sounding courses while pandering to popular fads. In journalism, there are more than 150 courses available for an industry that has precious few job openings. If you think it's just journalism, look at the CSI effect – 1700 enrolled on forensic science courses, training for a profession with only 2500 practitioners.
- (7) I'm not suggesting we shut down English departments and forensic science degrees en masse. Let them flourish if they provide an opportunity to study as a leisure activity. The growth of genealogy demonstrates the public appetite for recreational learning. By all means let people study history, the classics, novels, the media. But let it be in their spare time – not as state-sponsored, loan-financed relaxation.
- (8) With mathematics as the twentieth most popular subject at university, you can see that Renaissance scholars might look at us with something like disgust. We need to educate more technically skilled graduates to send out into the world economy who will be able to see sophisticated opportunities and take advantage of them, both intellectually and commercially.

Professor ADRIAN MONCK, Head of Journalism and Publishing, City University

No: the case against

- (9) We have come so far down the trail of thinking that people go to school in order to become foot-soldiers in the economic battle, as if paid employment were the sole meaning of life, that we scarcely understand what Aristotle meant by saying “we educate ourselves so that we can make a noble use of our leisure”. In contrast to this remarkable view, today’s dull-witted, pedestrian, pragmatic view seems to be that the educational minimum must be whatever is enough in the way of literacy and numeracy to operate a check-out till. That is what a recent Secretary of State for Education publicly thought.
- (10) Not that I agree with the apparent implication of Aristotle’s remark that a noble use of leisure is the only reason for education. I think that, in addition, education makes better workers, better voters, more informed, thoughtful, engaged and, therefore, responsible citizens, healthier and happier people, and a more mature, flourishing, open and progressive society. All these benefits do not accrue from limiting education to equipping people with functional skills adapted to the eight hours a day they are destined to spend at the economic coalface. It comes from drawing out their capacity for reflection, from helping them to develop skills of inquiry and criticism, allowing them to recognise what they need to know, to find it out, to evaluate it critically, and to apply it.
- (11) Moreover, a true education provides people with a broad knowledge of culture and history, enabling them to appreciate the amenities of civilised life, to understand what they encounter in their experience as citizens of the world and to relate with greater insight and generosity to others. Like any appetite, the appetite for finding out, and thinking about what is learned, grows by feeding; and with the nourishment it provides, come other goods of mind and heart.
- (12) These are admittedly utopian aspirations for education, but they are only so because we fail ourselves in two important ways in our expectations and what, as a society, we are prepared to grant ourselves. The first is that our mass education system exists almost exclusively for people in the first two decades of life and, during those years, we seek to download a national minimum curriculum into heads, in step-rank fashion with each age cohort passing uniformly through the sausage machine to a quantifiable outcome. The resulting pressure for aiming at common denominators is inevitable, and as numbers increase and budgets erode, expectations follow the latter.
- (13) The second is that we think education stops around the end of the second decade, and that people will then get on with the next stage of conformity, as both cogs in the wealth-production machine and consumers of its outputs. But education should be a life-long endeavour. When it is, it is richly satisfying and keeps minds fresh and flexible, and maintains interest in the possibilities of the world. By one of those incomprehensible acts of stupidity of which governments are so frequently capable, our own has decided no longer to fund “equal or lower qualifications” in higher education, meaning that that if you have a degree in English, and after 20 years in the workplace wish to study for a degree in computing or nursing, the government will not fund it. So much for the tens of thousands of people who, part-time, continue with, or return to, higher education to extend and refresh themselves by taking up new subjects and opening up new horizons.
- (14) There are those – surely, in other countries and times only? – who would like most people in the population to be drones, not too questioning or well-informed, not too apt to criticise, and easily persuadable about things, especially at election times when a few promises about tax cuts can do away with the need to ask people to think (in this case, who to vote for). The reason why such a narrow and manipulative view is wrong is precisely the reason why a broad liberal education, an education for life and not just for work, matters.

ANTHONY GRAYLING, Professor of Philosophy, University of London

Source: adapted from ANTHONY GRAYLING, *Is the Renaissance scholar dead?* The debate: Adrian Monck, *The Guardian*, 8 April 2008

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Section B**Sources B to D for Questions 2 to 5**

Source B

Following Barack Obama's successful use of social networking sites, British political parties have redoubled their attempts to use the internet with leading politicians like Gordon Brown posting videos on sites such as YouTube to influence voters. A few MPs use social networking sites not only to broadcast their views but also to listen to their constituents. However, too much political effort online simply mimics traditional marketing campaigning – treating voters as little more than shoppers, and political policies as slickly packaged products. Political campaigning is continuous with parties poking voters on Facebook or tweeting their latest policy proposals that amount to nothing more than business as usual. The overlooked lesson of Obama's internet campaign is that question and answer sessions treated voters as citizens with active roles to play in a democratic society rather than passive consumers swayed by political soundbites.

Source: adapted from Editorial, The Internet and Politics: Revolution.com, *The Guardian*, 4 January 2010
www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/04/iran-politics-blogging-internet
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Source C

Many young people are effectively being 'raised online' with four out of five 5–15 year olds having access at home and spending in excess of twenty hours a week using the internet, according to the Institute for Public Research. The report argues that much more needs to be done to protect young people from inappropriate content and to promote and enforce guidelines on the limits of acceptable behaviour. It recommends that:

- Ofcom should produce an annual review of the initiatives aimed at tackling harmful internet content
- Popular sites should develop guidelines setting out the limits of what young people can expect and how young people are expected to behave
- Such sites should join schemes to keep young people safe online, for instance by becoming funding members of the independent Internet Watch Foundation, which seeks to minimise illegal content
- Information and support for parents should be provided so they can make sure their children get the best out of the internet without being exposed to unnecessary risks.

Although internet sites have community guidelines or acceptable use policies, these are not always properly enforced. Unlike television programmes, internet content is not subject to any restrictions beyond general UK Law. No single body in the UK has responsibility for guiding the UK government's response or approach to potentially harmful internet content.

Source: adapted from Institute of Public Policy Research, A generation of youth are being 'raised online',
24 March 2008
www.ippr.org.uk/pressreleases/?id=3059

Source D

The Internet has irrevocably altered the way we communicate with one another. The World Wide Web has made our world a lot smaller.

The advent of emails allows for fast and direct transfer of information and files. Internet browsing on smart phones has amplified our ability to work from literally anywhere, and given us access to one another on a nearly 24hr basis. It is now entirely possible for someone in rural England to carry on conversations with people worldwide. With this new accessibility to people from other countries comes an increased need for cultural sensitivity. People in different parts of the world communicate in different ways due to cultural perspectives that can be at odds with one another.

Interpersonal relationships have been helped and hurt through the internet. A wide variety of internet based technologies have made it easier than ever to keep in touch. Video conferencing via technologies such as Skype even allow loved ones to see each other from miles away. However, this doesn't mean that the internet provides nothing but benefits. Speed and heightened emotions occasionally combine with disastrous results. The advent of social networking sites has created a vast range of communication opportunities. These sites can simply allow you to re-establish contact with friends from school you haven't talked to in years, or to build an extensive network of contacts for business purposes.

One other impact the internet has had is the explosion of user-generated content. It is now easier than ever for someone to stake their own little digital homestead. Whether this is a website, blog or article contribution, the internet is constantly popping up with new personalised content. It allows people to get information out in a faster and more accessible manner. No longer do a handful of media outlets have control over the communication of information.

Source: adapted from LAUREN NELSON, The Internet and Its Impact on Global Communication, 10 May 2010
www.ehow.com/about_6498605_internet-its-impact-global-communication.html

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