

## AMES response to SQA 12 Sep 2017

*The comments agreed by the AMES management committee are in red italics below the relevant sections:*

### SQA response to the Association for Media Education in Scotland (AMES)

*Non-communication instance #1: This is not strictly a response to AMES as it has never been sent to us. AMES sends all relevant papers to SQA but SQA rarely acknowledges their receipt.*

SQA notes the submission received by the Education and Skills Committee from AMES. SQA's formal response to this submission is as follows:

#### SQA – partnership working with AMES

SQA has a long standing and proactive relationship with AMES. Several AMES committee members have held ongoing senior roles in our current Media qualification exam teams helping to ensure that the assessments developed are aligned to the Media course specifications and that national standards are maintained. SQA staff regularly link up with AMES and attend their annual conference, which often covers sessions with a focus on SQA qualifications.

*[Non-communication instance #2: We welcome this continued partnership but we would request that we receive formal notification of decisions relative to media/film across all qualifications. Sometimes we have no idea whether new qualifications we have helped develop have been approved and are now available. Some AMES' members would be interested in qualifications outside National and Higher.]*

*We are delighted to see SQA staff at the conference. We always try to put on at least one workshop on the delivery of National/Higher Media. Usually however, it is impossible to find an SQA representative to offer such a session. One would have thought that the default position would be that SQA would provide someone.]*

A good example of proactive partnership working with AMES was the development of the new Media National Courses (National 3, 4, 5 and Higher) which replaced the original Media Studies course as part of the development of qualifications to support Curriculum for Excellence. AMES had key representation (two standing members) of the Qualifications Design Team (QDT) that was formed to oversee the development work of the new courses. Other members of this QDT included representatives from both schools and colleges, industry and Scottish Screen. AMES members of the QDT played an integral role in shaping the agreed content and assessment approach of the new Media course.

*[Scottish Screen ceased to exist in 2010. We assume it should read Creative Scotland.]*

SQA received positive feedback on the new approach from AMES officials – see below:

“The new SQA Higher Media qualification seems to me to show all the characteristics of Doll’s 4Rs. It builds on the basic skills of earlier years as giving pupils a lifelong framework for appreciating, creating and critiquing the media.

“The course has two units: Analysing Media content and Creating Media content. The course assessment is an assignment which focuses on researching, planning and developing media content, and a question paper that focuses on analysing media content and contexts. A

welcome change of emphasis is that pupils will have to consider the role of Media within society...”

Rick Instrell, Tuesday, 13 May 2014

See below for the full article: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/media-studies-course-is-gaining-in-value-13408501>

*[The 2014 article was written to promote the new course rather than critique it – AMES wants the qualification to succeed. AMES stands by its support for the positive merits of the course and this would have been evident in recent National 4/5 and Higher Media professional learning sessions delivered to 49 enthusiastic teachers over the last 3 weekends.*

*However, Media, like Computing, cannot become locked in amber. It must be up-to-date to help individual development and provide pathways into the media and creative industries. The recent professional learning sessions featured a detailed case study of an Irn-Bru campaign involving, amongst other companies, Edinburgh-based advertising agency (The Leith Agency), Edinburgh-based digital marketing agency (Blonde) and a Glasgow-based film production company (MTP). Such companies will provide future jobs for young people of drive and talent. This case study links to young people’s actual use of 21<sup>st</sup> C media and forward to careers in the media and creative industries.*

*So, over the last three years AMES has critically reflected on National and Higher Media and belatedly realised that it does not accurately reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century media use. In 2014, we were probably also unsure of how to teach topics such as social media. We can now see how to do that, but it would require revising the ‘role of the media’ sections of the National and Higher courses.*

**Non-communication instance #3:** *We have sent suggestions for such a revision which has not been acknowledged.*

*The National 5 (recently revised) and Higher Media specifications and assessment give no encouragement to teachers to tackle digital media. Thus, there is a tendency – especially amongst older teachers – to stay within their own 20<sup>th</sup> C media world (mass media e.g. advertising, print, broadcasting, film) rather than the 21<sup>st</sup> C media world inhabited by students (internet, digital and social media and perhaps mass media). Also, the marking instructions are so restrictive that it might be risky for teachers to encourage reference to social media in their examination responses.]*

### **Proposal for a new National Course in Film/Moving Image (based on the CCEA A-level approach)**

SQA staff worked with AMES on the above proposal and a detailed business case was prepared and given due consideration by SQA. Unfortunately this proposal was not approved as it was felt there was not a strong enough rationale for creating an additional and separate National Course in this related area. AMES was informed of this outcome. While we understand the positive delivery models for the CCEA A level, our view is that the position in Scotland is different, as we already have a new broad Media course that can be delivered through several media forms including film/moving image. Creating another National Course would also potentially split the existing Media cohort and make the maintenance of national standards very challenging. We currently already see a lot of very innovative work in film/moving image in the existing Media course and we showcased this recently in a special event at the Glasgow Film Theatre, which included a first-hand industry insight from a leading Scottish writer, director and producer.

See below: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/80115.html>

*[Non-communication instance #4: AMES has NOT been informed of this outcome! In fact, we had been hoping this session to work with Creative Scotland and the British Film Institute to take this forward. We thought that the evidence of demand from 48 schools and 7 colleges was sufficient to have made the 'economic case' which SQA demands. However, we would also argue that our recent report [Media Education and Film Education in Scotland](#) makes an even stronger **national** economic case for National and Higher Film courses which would provide our students with pathways into a dynamic Scottish creative industries sector.*

**Non-communication instance #5: Nor were we invited to the GFT event!**

*The pat response that a Film course would duplicate the Media course is unacceptable. Both Scott Donaldson of Creative Scotland and AMES have explained that whereas the Media course essentially takes a Social Science approach, a Film course would sit within Expressive Arts, alongside Art and Design, Dance, Drama, Music and Photography. These issues, and the chronic lack of relevant qualifications in Scotland as compared with the other UK nations, are covered in [Media Education and Film Education in Scotland](#). Thus, the Media course and the Film course complement each other. Creative work in Media simulates professional media production constrained by format, laws, regulatory codes and social norms. Creative production work in Film is constrained only by one's creative skills and imagination.*

**Non-communication instance #6: We have received no acknowledgement of the [Media Education and Film Education in Scotland](#) from any agency in Scotland other than the Education Committee.]**

SQA is positive about promoting the opportunities, via our National Course provision in Media and English, to encourage teachers to use film/digital media in teaching and learning to develop and enhance literacy skills. However, for this approach to be sustainable, the focus should be on exposing young people to this pedagogy throughout their Broad General Education.

Although the proposal to develop a new general course was not approved, SQA has moved forward with the development of a new National Progression Award at SCQF level 6 in Film and Media (working title). Such awards are increasingly becoming an important part of the mixed economy of qualification offering for the senior phase in the school sector often in partnership with colleges. In addition, SQA has also - this year - validated a new National Progression Award in Creative and Digital Media. This award has strong industry buy-in and forms part of the new Foundation Apprenticeship set up by Skills Development Scotland, again to widen the choice and relevance of opportunities for school pupils in the senior phase.

In summary with our existing National Courses and these newly created Awards we believe we have been proactive in creating a range of opportunities for development and progression in this area.

*[Non-communication instance #7: Whilst AMES was discussing a National/Higher Film qualification with SQA officers, we were never informed of the NPA award. The problem about this 'solution' is that most head teachers would not countenance NPAs being offered as it affects performance levels in school 'league tables'. The SQA response shows little recognition of what is possible in many schools. And the question arises: if Northern Ireland's CCEA can successfully address the issue, is SQA not up to it?]*

We have also had discussion with AMES colleagues around the potential to develop a Professional Development Award for teachers in Media. This proposal is still under consideration; however, there are issues around sufficient demand and appropriate funding to make this viable not just for SQA but also for schools and colleges. In terms of teacher CPD, there may be other avenues that could be

explored in order to address some of the current issues around teaching and learning in Media, and SQA would be happy to be part of discussions with colleagues in Education Scotland and AMES about possible approaches.

*[The PDA for teachers was suggested by AMES because it was aware that many teachers tackling National/Higher Media had no qualifications in the subject. They had been asked by their head teacher to offer Media as a way of making the curriculum more relevant for students. One must ask: would a head teacher ask an unqualified teacher to teach Chemistry or Mathematics?]*

*Thus, many teachers new to the subject seem surprised that they and their students should be aware of regulatory bodies such as Ofcom, ASA, BBFC and IPSO.*

*From 1983-1986, the Media Education Development Project (MEDP) aimed to place media education at the centre of teaching and learning in Scottish education. It was fully funded by the SED (under a UK Conservative government) and managed by the Scottish Council for Educational Technology/Scottish Film Council (SCET/SFC). AMES was heavily involved in this.*

*AMES suggests that, 31 years on, it is time for such an initiative. **Resolving the problem will require government funding.**]*

#### **Attainment in the current National Courses in Media (particularly Higher)**

While there was a drop in the pass rate this year for Higher Media, we did observe some very strong performing centres with A grade rates of 40% and also some very high scoring marks for both the question paper and assignment.

The assessment standards for this course have remained the same for the last three years and the role of SQA is to ensure, via our exam team, that these standards are consistently maintained and appropriately benchmarked at Higher level. It is not appropriate to simply compare the pass rates of one National Course with another, as each has its own unique cohort – this is particularly so in Media, where the vast majority of candidates access the Higher course without first completing the supporting National 5 course.

Our comparative statistics indicate that nationally, candidates undertaking Media courses are performing at a broadly similar level in Media as they are in other subjects. However, given the results profile over the last 3 years, SQA has been very proactive in offering enhanced Understanding Standards events and online exemplification materials in this subject; we have also recently appointed a new Subject Implementation Manager who can provide more bespoke subject specific CPD opportunities to centres/local authorities. Two further points of clarification:

Access to Understanding Standards events/website Currently the Understanding Standards events and website are only available to staff from SQA approved centres as these events and website include access to live assessment materials across all subjects. SQA can consider exceptional access to the secure site for bodies such as Initial Teacher Education Institutes when certain agreed conditions are met.

*[Of course, the absurd situation in schools is that most teachers cannot access Understanding Standards as the password is held by their Principal Teacher!]*

*Question: Why can such access not be provided to teacher organisations and professional learning providers? Surely, they are equally capable of meeting “certain agreed conditions.”]*

## **SQA Qualifications staff churn**

There has only been one change of SQA Qualifications Manager for National Courses Media in the last twelve years. For capacity reasons, a separate fixed term development team was put in place to manage the development of the new National Courses for all subjects. SQA's existing team, who looks after National Courses in both English and Media, worked in parallel with this team until their work was complete. The Qualifications Manager who manages our vocationally related provision including our HNC/D and Professional Development qualifications has been in post for many years and worked proactively with centres and industry contacts to develop and maintain our provision in this area.

*[Amongst member of the AMES committee, we have at least three instances where changes of staff have had a deleterious effect on qualification development and communications.*

***Non-communication instance #8.** AMES committee members often attend meetings to advise on the development of new qualifications but are rarely either informed when the qualification becomes 'live' or even thanked for our time.]*

### ***In conclusion:***

*SQA's 'response' shows exactly where the problem lies. AMES wants dialogue and an improved portfolio of media and film qualifications; SQA does not.*

*And whether it is SQA, Education Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Education and Training department, the result is the same. AMES communicates its critical reflections and research. But it remains largely unacknowledged and disappears into the 'black hole' of Scottish educational complacency. If our comments are acknowledged, it is only to mindlessly repeat a pat mantra from last century.*

*20 years ago, the Scottish people voted 3:1 to escape from authoritarian, complacent government and unaccountable monopolistic agencies.*

*20 years later, in the words of the Who's 'Won't get fooled again': "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss" ...*

*There has been much recent discussion of this in newspaper opinion pieces. Much of it deals with generalities. But what the above discussion provides is a case study in how the 'boss' remains the 'boss' in Scotland: ignore contrary opinion; endlessly repeat vacuous mantras; only fund projects which come from the centre.*

*AMES asks the Education Committee of the Scottish Parliament to help restore the balance of power in Scotland's civic life. Please try to ensure that educational agencies act in the interests of all Scottish young people and the wider Scottish culture and economy. AMES believes that a comprehensive media education policy would make a powerful, positive contribution to the betterment of our society.*

***AMES management committee, 12 September 2017.***