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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE (NEW)  
MEDIA STUDIES  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2018**

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# GCE (NEW) MEDIA STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### AS UNIT 1: INVESTIGATING THE MEDIA

##### Section A: Selling Images: Advertising and Music Video

The unseen text for question 1 was the television advert for *Samsung's Galaxy S8 smartphone*, 2017. The campaign is called *Samsung: The New Normal*.

The question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of media language used in the audio-visual text and the ways in which this media language is used to attract audiences (AO1). The question also required that candidates demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the key concepts through analysis of the advertisement (AO2). The bullet points in the question directed candidates to consider how audiences are categorised by media producers and the technical, visual and audio codes used.

This proved to be a rich text that was very accessible for candidates who were clearly well prepared for this question. For many candidates this was their strongest answer. It was encouraging to see that candidates across the mark range could analyse the text in varying degrees of detail, employing appropriate subject specific media terminology. They were confident in discussing both the codes and conventions of advertisements together with the different elements of media language: they were particularly strong when discussing the visual codes in terms of content and audience appeal. Better responses discussed the impact and effect of specific camera shots and the relationship of the visuals to the soundtrack. They also articulated acute awareness of the purpose of the advertisement in its aim to sell values, lifestyles and images as part of the brand. Although the use of critical perspectives was not specifically required, it did feature, especially in the higher bands. The range of critical perspectives referred to included: Barthes and semiology, cultivation theory and Stuart Hall's reception theory. The best answers used the critical perspectives to inform analysis and to explore how audiences were positioned by the construction of the text. Some candidates explored audience categories more explicitly than others, showing understanding of the ways in which audiences are grouped; this included references to age, gender and social class, as well as lifestyle and taste. Some candidates explored psychographic profiling, linking points made to analysis of the advert. Other responses referred to the target audience in more generalised terms without elaborating on who this audience might be. Many candidates explored representations within the advert as a way of engaging with how the audience might be attracted or categorised, which was a valid approach. However, some candidates moved away from the question and explored ethnicity and theories on the representation of ethnicity, which detracted from the focus of the question asked.

There was some excellent, detailed analysis, which also incorporated understanding of the ways in which media language incorporates values and promotes messages. The more sophisticated responses explored the advertisement fully to give a valid and perceptive interpretation of the text, showing understanding of the role of the advertisement in the marketing of the *Samsung* brand across digital platforms, with reference to the campaign hashtag. Weaker responses tended to describe the visual codes without analysing the purpose and effect. Other responses recognised the connotations of the visuals but failed to then explore them in any detail or link them to the question of how they might attract audiences.

Candidates must be aware that they need to focus on the specific elements of the question asked and consider the bullet points in the question; they are there to give an explicit focus to their response. The candidates who had a clear focus on the bullet points produced a more coherent and relevant response.

The range of points made included:

### **How audiences are categorised by media producers**

- audiences are grouped and categorised by media producers by age, gender and social class, as well as by lifestyle and taste
- the media language used and the content of the advert has been used to attract the target audience
- the representations within the advert reflect the target demographic - family is central to the campaign
- males and females in roles as father and mother are prominent – a dominant hegemonic familial set up is presented
- audiences are defined by their demographic profile, categorising the target audience through occupation and income
- the visuals of the advert suggest comfortable affluence both through the settings and activities presented so the audience are within a high economic band
- audiences can also be categorised by their values, attitudes and lifestyles: psychographic profile. The visuals and content clearly present a lifestyle that values family and technology.
- dominant, mainstream values are reinforced throughout
- the target audience is positioned to respond positively to the messages and meanings communicated

### **The technical, visual and audio codes**

- the audio code of a baby's cry from the outset of the advert introduces the underlying thematic concept - the birth of a new generation for whom the currently impossible will become *The New Normal*
- point of view camera shots both from both the male figure's perspective and the baby's perspective (at start and end of the advert) establishes a relationship between the use of technology and the most important aspects of family life –several different scenarios are exemplified through the advert
- reference to repeated demonstrative action as the advert foregrounds the use of the Galaxy S8 smart phone, as well as other Samsung innovations such as the VR headset

- close-ups on the product to secure brand recognition
- the visuals underpinned with a non-diegetic song, the lyrics of which serve to reinforce the preferred meanings
- lyrics such as: *across the universe*; *images of broken light*; *sounds of laughter*, the repeated refrain of *nothing's gonna change my world* and the lexical set of nature reinforce the messages communicated
- visual codes which illustrate a range of situations such as swimming underwater, playing in a domestic setting, learning in which the technology is central to the experience, so reinforcing the product's actual capacity and suggested importance to a modern family lifestyle
- tracking shots of children running with dinosaurs reinforces the slogan of the campaign: *One generation's impossible is the next one's normal*.
- the slogan is conventionally positioned at the end of the advert
- the final frame #DoWhatYouCant is part of a campaign strategy to maximise brand presence across platforms
- range of settings incorporate everyday experiences and the more wondrous-for example recording of the Northern Lights (then shared via the product with family at home)
- the range of different settings: home, school, street, outdoors are recognisable to audiences, suggesting a relatable lifestyle
- visuals illustrate the product's centrality to everyday transactions e.g. making a contactless payment; the inclusion of different generations within situations suggests that the different generations can be connected through technology
- the references to nature in the audio and the visuals naturalises the use of advanced technology
- images of children using the smart phone underwater and during play positions the product in the new generation's everyday life – *The New Normal*
- recognition of the song by target demographic: Rufus Wainwright's - *Across the Universe* (a cover version of the Beatles original)
- the lyrics communicate messages and values: family values remain the same but technology connects the generations, so enhancing family life
- the preferred messages and meanings communicated reinforce the target demographic's sense of themselves

### **Section B: News in the Online Age**

Question 2a asked candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how recent technological development has changed the way news is distributed. Most of the candidates clearly understood the ways in which technological changes affected news generally, whether through its accessibility or its presence on social media platforms. Some candidates constructed a response that explained the move of traditional news forms such as newspapers to online versions and used their studied set products to support the points that they made. Although references to the specific set products was not a requirement of this question, many candidates found this useful to give a more detailed explanation of how technological developments have changed news distribution. Some responses did explicitly engage with an explanation of what is meant by *distribution* which helped to focus their response, as some candidates did stray from the question to write about all aspects of news media. There were many references to Clay Shirky's End of Audience theory and, when used appropriately, this helped to further demonstrate an understanding of the evolving nature of news distribution. There were many excellent and accurate responses which demonstrated a perceptive grasp of the changing news media landscape; those at the lower end tended to be generalised with a common sense, straightforward account of news today.

Most candidates wrote at an appropriate length for a ten mark question covering a range of relevant points that were developed in terms of explanation. However some candidates' responses were limited by brevity and, at the other end, a few wrote beyond the scope of a ten mark response. This is only an issue if time management across the paper is affected: it is something for centres bear in mind as they prepare candidates for exam performance.

Candidates explored points such as:

- all newspapers have an online presence and content is available on social media platforms and through apps
- audiences now consume a news brand in both print and digital forms, accessing digital forms through a variety of devices
- the audience reach is broadened because of the ability to access news through digital platforms
- many audiences now access traditional print forms through a digital platform (set product newspaper and its online equivalent might be referred to in support of points)
- news organisations use social media to update the news and to keep audiences informed
- users can *share* and comment on news constantly, so contributing to the distribution of news
- audiences can become prosumers, an example of citizen journalism which has evolved from more traditional forms of industry led journalism.

### Question 2b

For this section candidates are expected to have studied products set by WJEC. The AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives are equally weighted with ten marks for knowledge and understanding and ten marks for application of knowledge and understanding through analysis. The question asked candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how an *event* has been represented though an analysis of, in this instance, **two** news media products.

The [specification](#) states that at least one significant event must be studied as part of this section and learners must consider how the event has been represented and disseminated across the selected news media products. A range of news events were referred to in candidates' responses. Some of these included: the poisoning of the Russian Skripals with Novichok nerve agent, the Syria conflict, the Florida high school shootings and the London Grenfell Tower fire. Most of the news stories covered by centres were appropriate. A few candidates referred to historical stories rather than more contemporary news stories which was problematic. While the specification suggests that to deepen understanding of the forms and context of the products it is beneficial that learners have an awareness of the historical significance of news and how it changes, the focus of this unit is on *News in the Online Age*. Therefore, the study of an historical event would not allow for the exploration of how events are represented across different sources of news.

This section proved the most problematic in terms of rubric infringements by candidates and it is advisable that the specification is referred to when planning to teach this unit. The specification states that centres must select products for study from a list provided. Learners must study **one** option **from each of the groups listed** which include: a newspaper and its online equivalent; a news website and radio news online. It is also expected that learners study the changing nature of audiences'/users' relationship with news so a range of different social media sites should also be considered. Set products for this section can be found on page 17 of the specification.

The rubric infringements included the following:

- only one newspaper product referred to, while the question required reference to **two** news media products
- some responses referred to one set news media product and one non-set product
- some responses included references to *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph*, *Fox News*, none of which are set products
- some candidates did not write about a specific news product; instead responses made generalised references to newspapers or online news

Most centres, however, had taught the set options, chosen an appropriate news story and clearly prepared their candidates thoroughly for this section. Through the teaching of *News in the Online Age* in the classroom, centres might explore a wide range of news products as a starting point, if this is considered an appropriate approach. However, in the examination, it should be made clear to the candidates that they must refer to the specified products as set by WJEC to avoid any rubric infringements.

While 2b proved slightly more problematic for candidates, due to some of the points listed above, the best answers showed excellent knowledge and understanding of representation as they engaged explicitly with *how* the selection and combination of different elements of media language constructed a version of reality. At the top end this was often linked to the values, attitudes and beliefs held by a news organisation. As the news products are set and taught, this knowledge and understanding of political alliance or regulations of impartiality helped to inform the analysis of the chosen products. At the top end, this really allowed for perceptive points about the representation of the news event covered. There was some reference to critical perspectives in response to this question, although not specifically required, most commonly Barthes and semiotics and Hall's reception theory, with a focus on how the product studied had been encoded with meanings. Again the best answers applied the critical perspectives appropriately and used them to inform the analysis.

Responses in the middle band focused on more straightforward aspects of representations referring to the codes and conventions of newspapers, the codes and conventions of online news, and the codes and conventions of radio news depending on the news product chosen. Some analysis at the lower end lacked specific detail and so remained fairly basic. Selecting products from the different option groups allowed for quite insightful engagement with how different industry contexts impact on the way in which the event is represented. An example of this is the difference between how a tabloid, *The Daily Mirror*, represented a news story and how BBC Radio 4's the *Today* programme represented the same story. This reiterates the importance of the set products that were selected by WJEC to give candidates the best possible opportunity to fully explore the scope of the specification requirements for this section.

Responses explored the following aspects in relation to their chosen products and particular news story covered:

- the different elements of media language that are used to re-present the event studied
- the process of mediation that occurred in the construction of the representation
- the selection of different elements of media language linked to the media product being referred to such as: the use of language and mode of address including speech and interviews (radio news), the use of images, use of headline and its connotations, typography, graphics and colour and interactive features (online news)
- the meanings and messages that have been encoded within the representation

- the point of view incorporated within the representation
- the significance of ownership and how political associations influence the way an event is represented (references could be made to the political associations of *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Times* or the impartiality of BBC news outlets)
- how the representation of the event has been constructed to address the target audience
- how the representation positions audiences to respond

## Section C: Film Industries - from Wales to Hollywood

### Question 3a

The candidates were asked to explain the importance of co-production to the Welsh film industry, referring to the film made in Wales that they had studied. This question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of media industries (AO1).

Overall the majority of candidates could explain the following:

- The importance of co-productions to national film industries
- The significance of patterns of ownership
- The significance of economic factors to film industries, including support from film agencies and grants to the film industry and films
- How the processes of production, distribution and exhibition shape films in a global context

For a ten mark question candidates made a range of relevant points linked to the above, using references to the film they had studied to support and expand on their explanation. This question was unproblematic as candidates had clearly explored their film in relation to the processes of production and distribution and were, for the most part, able to show knowledge of the companies involved in the production of their studied film. They were also able to refer to details of the film and/or its marketing to support points made. In some instances, candidates gave an account of the facts surrounding the companies involved in the co-production without linking back to the question of *the importance of co-production*, with which the best responses did engage. In a small number of cases candidates seemed not to understand what *production* and specifically *co-production* means, let alone consider its importance.

### Question 3b

For this question candidates are expected, like Section B, to have studied products set by WJEC. The AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives are equally weighted with ten marks for knowledge and understanding and ten marks for application of knowledge and understanding through analysis of the set product studied. The question asked candidates to consider how conventional the narrative structure of one of the films they have studied is and to use Todorov's narrative theory in their response. It was pleasing to see that centres chose products across the option range and candidates could write with equal confidence across centres on the product they had studied. At the top end, answers fully engaged with the *how conventional* element of the question, fully exploring the film product studied in detail and demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of narrative and Todorov's theory. At times responses to this question were less developed than other questions on the paper and some candidates did not attempt question 3 at all; this might be indicative of time management issues across the paper as this was the final question. Time management is therefore something that candidates must practise; candidates need to balance the requirements of the 10 mark 2(a) and 3(a) questions with the requirements of the 20 mark 2(b) and 3(b) questions which incorporate both AO1 and AO2.

Most responses demonstrated an understanding of narrative structures but at the lower end this sometimes became a recount of the film's storyline at the expense of analysis. Use of Todorov's theory of narratology was expected in this question, as evident in the wording of the question itself. In the higher bands, there was explicit knowledge, understanding and application of Todorov's theory, while responses in the middle band included key aspects of Todorov's theory, mapping out features the theory to the plot in a straightforward manner. Responses in the lower bands only engaged implicitly, or quite briefly, with Todorov's theory, or even in some instances not at all. Some candidates also ignored the narrative question completely and instead focused on how typical their film product was in terms of genre which did affect the quality of the response; narrative is a smaller part of the concept of genre and not the focus of the question set.

As in Section B, some candidates did not apply their knowledge and understanding to the specified products studied and instead wrote about a film of their own choice which is, of course, a rubric infringement. However this was less prevalent than in Section C. Candidates were, on the whole, prepared well for this section. However candidates must refer to specific details and key scenes from the products they have studied to support their knowledge and understanding given the equal weighting of the assessment objectives.

Responses explored:

- narrative construction, structures, techniques and conventions
- the significance of genre (including narrative structures) to the film industry and audiences
- narratology: the idea that all narratives share a basic structure that involves a movement from one state of equilibrium to another
- the idea that these two states of equilibrium are separated by a period of imbalance or disequilibrium
- the idea that the way in which narrative is resolved can have particular ideological significance.

For AO2, candidates applied knowledge and understanding of narrative construction and narratology to an analysis of the films studied.

## GCE (NEW) MEDIA STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

### AS UNIT 2: CREATING A MEDIA PRODUCTION

Centres and learners have generally worked well to fulfil the requirements of the new specification and it was pleasing to see the full range of briefs utilised and some excellent work uploaded. A very small minority of centres appeared to write their own briefs, or to incorporate elements from more than one designated brief, which meant that the requirements of the specification were not fully met in these instances. Centres are reminded that they must select one of the briefs outlined in the [specification](#). There was slightly more print than audio-visual work and fewer centres chose Brief 2 than Briefs 1 and 3.

#### **Research:**

There was some thoroughly detailed and excellent research submitted, but a significant minority of centres had not instructed their learners to analyse three contrasting (relevant) products and/or to explore the key areas of genre conventions, the representation issues raised by the product and how the text/s use media language to target a specific audience (page 27 of the specification). The best research was undertaken by learners who focussed on the requirements of the selected brief - for example Dimension films; adverts within Vogue or entertainment/showbiz websites - and who used bullet point or spider diagrams to highlight the required areas.

There is a strict word limit of 600-750 words (an additional 10% is allowed) for the research and it is not acceptable to allow learners to write as much as they can, or want to. Page 51 of the specification provides a clear outline detailing what assessors must do if learners exceed this limit.

#### **Planning:**

The specification is quite precise in outlining what planning is required and what can be assessed; this includes a storyboard for the audio-visual briefs and a draft design per page (therefore four) for Print options. There are no marks available for any other work submitted and therefore it was disappointing to see the amount of additional work that some learners had undertaken, for which they cannot be assessed. Where learners have clearly been awarded marks for additional planning activities (not required by the specification), centres are at risk of having marks adjusted.

Obviously, there needs to be a link between what the learner has discovered during research and their planning. The planning undertaken should also pay attention to the requirements of the brief (and the mark scheme), for example, *the application of knowledge and understanding of genre, representation and audience*.

Whilst original images are not required for print planning, random images do not enhance the planning process and brand identity – and accurate sizing - should also be considered in order to make the planning *relevant and appropriate*.

It is recommended that storyboards are approximately 15 -18 frames in length and attention does need to be paid to the technical aspects (such as camera language, editing, timings and audio codes) in order to make the planning appropriate and 'relevant'. Hand drawn storyboards are acceptable; however storyboards which use grabbed stills from completed productions are not acceptable because these are clearly made post-production and are not, therefore, a planning tool.

### **Production:**

Moderators reported having seen some excellent productions from across all three briefs. The standard of some work was near professional and a real joy to see, suggesting that there is some excellent technical and creative teaching taking place across centres. However, there was also a tendency to over-reward production work and so centres are reminded of the following:

- Print productions must be completed to the required dimensions.
- Learners must use a minimum of 5 original images across print productions (Brief 3 Option 2 requires a minimum of 6 original images across the campaign).
- Learners working in pairs on A/V work must adhere to the designated roles – one as camera and one as editor, *including sound*. Centres **MUST** make it clear who has worked together and what their roles have been.
- Learners working in pairs must undertake an individual print piece (as specified by the relevant brief) and these must be taken into consideration when awarding marks. Many individual posters were poorly constructed and too similar across the pair (for example, using the same image), which should have had an impact on the awarding of marks for that learner.
- Learners must apply an understanding of the specified area of representation to their productions.
- Learners must pay attention to the required target audience for their productions.

The last two bullet points are important to remember because a technically excellent piece of work cannot receive top band marks if these are not sufficiently met.

### **Reflective Analysis:**

The function of the reflective analysis is not to describe the process of production or for the learner to explain what they thought they had done well (or not done well). It is not a description of work done. It has a very specific function and the requirements for it are stated on page 27 of the specification. Learners must:

- Analyse and evaluate their production in relation to the **three** products they used in their research.
- Focus on how they have incorporated key **genre conventions** into their productions, include a discussion of the **representation issues** raised by their production, and explore how they have used **media language** (for example visual, technical, audio, written codes) to target their **specified audience**.
- Word-process their reflective analysis.

Again, there is a word limit on the reflective analysis of 650-850 words (+/- 10%) and markers should not assess anything beyond this limit.

The very best reflective analyses were articulate and detailed and it was very clear that these learners were well aware of both the specification requirements and the requirements of the mark scheme. Many reflective analyses successfully used thumbnails from their production work to analyse alongside their original research texts.

**Administration:**

This was the first year for centres to upload work and for moderators to download it. On the whole, the system worked well but some valuable lessons have been learnt:

- Please upload files in rank order (this is an enormous help to moderators).
- It is not necessary to upload the work from all learners – only those who are in the moderation sample.
- Please use the required file formats.
- Please try to combine pieces of work and not upload files each page separately. Files should be combined into the cover sheet, research and planning, production, reflective analysis.
- Please clearly label the files - preferably with learner surname, candidate number and identification of the task. For example, Bloggs 1234 Research. Some labelling was obscure (for example: 'long', 'thin'); some was unhelpful (for example 'draft', 'final', 'AS', 'Sixth Form', 'Joe's stuff' or the ubiquitous 'my work').
- Centres with learners undertaking paired (A/V) work must upload the pair work form indicating who has worked with whom. A note on the cover sheet would also be helpful.

**Finally – a note about cover sheets:**

Cover sheets are the first thing the Moderator looks at and the more detail on them, the more helpful they are to the whole process. Indeed, they are an essential element and need to be completed as thoroughly as possible.

Please, therefore, remember the following:

- Both the learner and the teacher must sign them.
- The review dates should not be the end date, but the dates that the teacher reviewed – and authenticated – the work during the whole NEA process.
- For large centres with more than one teacher, they should indicate where and how cross-moderation has taken place.
- They should address the moderator, not the learner.
- They should be completed with reference to the mark scheme and the specification.



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