



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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

SUMMER 2019

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MEDIA STUDIES

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1: INVESTIGATING THE MEDIA

General Comments

It is apparent from papers viewed that the paper was engaged with confidently overall as it proved highly accessible to candidates across each question. It is pleasing to see, at this early stage in the paper's cycle, that candidates are familiar with the expectations and demands of each question and the requirements of the assessment objectives.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Selling Images: Advertising and Music Video

1. *Explore how representations of gender have been constructed in the **two** advertisements.* [40]

In your answer you should consider:

- *the use of media language to construct representations of gender*
- *the purpose of the representations*
- *how representations embody values and messages.*

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products

The unseen resource consisted of two print advertisements. Advertisement one was for an Estee Lauder perfume *Modern Muse*. The second advertisement was for a TAG Heuer watch.

The question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of representations of gender constructed in the print texts [AO1]. The question also required that candidates demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through analysis of the advertisements [AO2]. The bullet points in the question directed candidates to consider: the ways in which the representations were constructed through the use of media language; the purpose of the representations and how representations embody values and messages.

This proved to be a rich text that was very accessible for candidates who were clearly well prepared for this question. It was encouraging to see that candidates across the mark range could analyse both texts in detail while employing appropriate subject specific media terminology. Candidates were confident in discussing the representations of gender together with the different elements of media language that helped to construct the representations; both visual and written elements. The best responses discussed the polysemic meanings of the representations constructed and the ways in which the representations could be considered as challenging to the hegemonic norm or conforming to stereotypical representations. Candidates were able to fully engage with the diverse range of representations offered by commercial advertising as part of their analysis. In the most successful responses, all the bullet points were fully engaged with. At the top end of the assessment descriptors the most successful responses also offered a perceptive and detailed exploration of both advertisements and developed a point of view in response to the question. Weaker responses relied on description of the main features of the advertisements and made basic assertions about whether the representations were positive or negative.

Although the use of critical perspectives was not specifically required, they did feature across bands and were used effectively at the higher end to explore the values and messages embedded within the constructed representations. More useful theoretical perspectives applied included Gauntlett and Hall; references to Mulvey's Male Gaze also featured but tended to be less useful when responses did not incorporate an understanding of the purpose of the advertisements and the likely target demographic.

Overall the resource materials prompted interesting, detailed, varied responses which allowed candidates to fully explore the concept of representations in a valid purposeful way. Candidates were confident in the analysis of the visual aspects of print media such as design and layout conventions; positioning of images/photographs and the use of written language. The interrelationship of the visual and the written codes allowed for more *detailed explorations* of the representations as the slogans, copy, and hashtag/digital platform links placed the gender representations within the framework of contemporary commercial advertising.

Section B: News in the Online Age

2. (a) *Explain the ways in which audiences/users interact with online news.* [10]

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

Question 2a asked candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ways in which audiences/users interact with online news meeting AO1 requirements only. Responses were expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media industries and audiences from the conceptual framework, such as:

- how audiences interact with news and related online media such as news websites or social media platforms
- the changing nature of audiences'/users' relationship with news including consumption and interaction
- the interrelationship between media technologies and patterns of consumption and response

Candidates clearly understood the ways in which audiences were able share and comment on news in comparison with more traditional print newspapers, and they brought into responses their understanding of online media and related 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 reference to the specific set products was not a requirement of this question many candidates found this a useful approach in order to support a detailed explanation of how audiences interact with news. Many responses confidently explained how online news media, along with social media, allow audiences to become active consumers who choose when to consume news and who also select stories that are relevant to them. This active audience engagement was compared with earlier forms of news that offered fewer opportunities for audience interaction. Although references to critical perspectives were not a requirement for this question 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 changing nature of news consumption and the audience's relationship to news in the online age. There were many excellent and accurate responses which demonstrated a perceptive grasp of the evolving news media landscape while those at the lower end tended to be more 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 appropriate points that were developed in terms of explanation. Some candidates' responses were limited by brevity, so it is important to prepare candidates for a ten-mark question which requires *detailed explanation* at the higher end. Overall this question was effectively engaged with and was unproblematic for candidates.

2. (b) *Explore how media language communicates meaning in news products.*

*In your response you must analyse **one** set newspaper front page **and** the online version of the newspaper you have studied.* [20]

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products

For this question, candidates are expected to have studied products set by the 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 explore how media language communicates meaning in news products. They were further directed to analyse their set newspaper front page and the online version of the newspaper they had studied. The specification states that at least one significant event must be studied, and learners must consider how the event is represented and disseminated across the news media studied. The event must be a 'hard' news item, such as one related to politics, crime, foreign affairs or economics.

A range of appropriate news events were referred to in candidates' responses. Some of these included: the Christchurch shootings, the Manchester bombings, the Skipals' poisoning, which has continued as a news story, and many political stories involving Theresa May and/or Donald Trump. The most successful answers showed excellent knowledge and understanding of media language, as they engaged explicitly with *how* media language is used to communicate meaning in relation to appropriate set products. 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, knowledge and understanding of political alliance and reader demographics helped to inform the analysis which at the top end allowed for perceptive points about the ways in which media language influence and communicate meanings while also incorporating points of view and values. There was some reference to critical perspectives in response to this question although this was not specifically required, the most frequent being Barthes and semiotics and Hall's reception theory with a focus on how the products studied had been encoded with meanings. The better answers applied the critical perspectives appropriately and used them to inform the analysis.

Confident responses engaged with both the newspaper front page and the online version of the newspaper often reinforcing points of similarity in the coverage of a hard news story or exploring differences related to the elements specific to the medium. For example, in relation to the online news product, the following elements were explored: the ability to embed audio visual material, live coverage of a news event, immediacy, more in-depth reporting and user interaction and response to the news event. Responses in the middle band focused on more straightforward aspects of media language referring to the codes and conventions of newspapers and the codes and conventions of the online news version with some detailed reference to a specific news story. Some analysis at the lower end lacked specific detail; some responses did not refer explicitly to a news story at all and some were heavily descriptive and generalised so remaining basic.

Some candidates found this question challenging, evidenced through item level data and scripts reviewed, as some candidates were unsure as to what was meant by *media language* and in other instances there was a disconnect between *media language* and how this *communicates meaning*. In teaching approaches, it is important that each of the assessment areas outlined in the specification are engaged with explicitly in preparation for exam questions. It is also important to reinforce the set products to be referred to in the exam responses as this year again there were rubric infringements. Although there were fewer references to news products that are not within the WJEC option choices, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* still appeared. There were rubric infringements which resulted from candidates not adhering to the requirements of the question set. The question stated: *In your response you must analyse one set newspaper front page **and** the online version **of the newspaper** you have studied.* However, some candidates referred to a newspaper front page and then referenced a different news website which resulted in a rubric infringement. In preparation for the examination it is important to train candidates to identify exactly what the question is asking and the specific requirements of the question that need to be met.

Section C: Film Industries - from Wales to Hollywood

3. (a) *Explain how the film industry uses media technologies to reach national and global audiences. Refer to the set film made in Wales you have studied to support your points.* [10]

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

The candidates were asked to explain how the film industry uses media technologies to reach national and global audiences. This question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of media industries [AO1] referring to the film made in Wales to support points made. Candidates were required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding related to the following:

- the relationship between recent technological change and media distribution and exhibition
- the impact of digitally convergent media platforms on media distribution and exhibition
- how films maintain audiences through marketing across platforms
- how film industries reach audiences through different media technologies and platforms

The best answers demonstrated accurate knowledge and understanding of the film industry which was used to answer the question that was asked, and they made a range of relevant points. These responses also referred to details of the film made in Wales studied to support points made and they considered how media technologies were used to reach national and global audiences. Responses addressed the importance of social media platforms in reaching audiences related to limited budgets and the need to generate interest before a film release. Some responses did bring in knowledge of the Hollywood industry to make comparative points or to explain the advantages of technological developments for smaller film companies. Responses also referenced the emergence of platforms such as Netflix exploring the impact on contemporary film distribution and exhibition. Less successful answers simply demonstrated knowledge of the film industry related to their studied set product without addressing the question asked. In these responses there was limited or no consideration of how *media technologies* were used to reach audiences and instead there was downloaded information that lacked explanation. It is advisable, therefore, that candidates need practice in identifying the specific aspects of their knowledge and understanding they need to draw on to effectively answer the question. Aside from this the question was, on the whole, unproblematic and candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the film industry appropriately with varying levels of detail.

3. (b) *Explore how the film industry uses genre to attract audiences.* [20]

In your response, you must:

- *demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Neale's theory of genre*
- *analyse **both** films you have studied using Neale's theory of genre.*

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products

The AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives are equally weighted in in this question with ten marks for knowledge and understanding and ten marks for application of knowledge and understanding through analysis of the set products studied. The question asked candidates to explore how the film industry uses genre to attract audiences. In addition, bullet points directed candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Neale's theory of genre in reference to both films studied.

It was pleasing to see that centres chose products across the option range and candidates could write with confidence on the products they had studied. At the top end, answers fully engaged with *how* the film industry *uses genre* to *attract audiences* fully exploring the film products studied in detail. More successful responses also demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of genre and explicitly explored Neale's theory through analysis. Most responses demonstrated knowledge of genre and were able to demonstrate this understanding through references to films studied with varying degrees of detail. Some responses simply recounted the codes and conventions of the films' genre in a straightforward way without considering how the industry used genre to attract audiences. Responses in the lowest bands only engaged implicitly with genre offering basic points or simply describing what happens in each film.

Just like 2b, this question required reference to set products and this was not problematic. If only one film was used in the analysis or the second film was only referred to briefly, this appeared to be because of time management. At times, this question was less developed than other questions on the paper, so this needs to be taken into consideration when preparing students for examinations to ensure that time is allocated in a balanced way.

Candidates were prepared well for this section as candidates were aware of the need to refer to details and key scenes from the products they had studied to support their knowledge and understanding, however tailoring responses to the specifics of the question needs refinement.

Key assessment areas from the specification referenced in this question include:

AO1

Responses will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of film industries and audiences, including:

- the significance of genre to film industries and audiences
- principles of repetition and variation of a repertoire of elements
- how film marketing uses genre to appeal to national and international audiences

AO2

Responses will apply knowledge and understanding of the concepts of industries and audiences to analysis of the films studied.

Summary of key points

Centres have prepared candidates well for questions and overall candidates do understand the different expectations of the 10-mark AO1 questions and the 20-mark AO1 and AO2 questions, which is very pleasing. However:

- Candidates need to address the specific facets of each question in 2a and 3a rather than just demonstrating knowledge and understanding in a general way – 'downloading' information
- Similarly, in 2b and 3b *specific* questions are asked so knowledge, understanding and analysis needs to be tailored to the actual question that has been set to strengthen the focus of responses
- For 2b candidates need to refer to the set products specified by the WJEC
- For 2b candidates need to refer to the set products directed by the exam question

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UNIT 2: CREATING A MEDIA PRODUCTION

General Comments

Moderators reported seeing some excellent work this year. It was good to see that there were very few rubric infringements with most centres meeting the requirements of the Specification by selecting the appropriate brief and option for their candidates. Most centres opted for Brief 1 or 3, with very few opting for Brief 2. More centres appear to be offering print rather than audio visual, and some centres offered their candidates a choice. A significant minority of candidates exceeded the word limits for their Research and Reflective Analysis. Centres must adhere to the requirements on page 51 of the Specification and penalise candidates who exceed the limit.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Administration

Most work was uploaded by the deadline and was easily accessible to moderators. It would help enormously if centres could label folders clearly with the candidate's surname and what it is: for example: blogs, research; blogs, planning etc. Tags like media work, coursework, John's work, Kate's final draft etc. are not helpful.

Cover sheets were more accurately completed this year, making it easier to see how assessment had been applied. A notable exception was the lack of comment for individual print work for those working in pairs from most centres and the lack of dates and initials for reviewing the work from a small minority of centres. Both of these are essential.

Research

Many candidates submitted relevant and detailed research which adhered to the requirements outlined on page 23 of the Specification. Research is a key element of the NEA, as it is this that should inform both candidates' Planning and their Production. Consequently, the materials selected by candidates for their research must be relevant to the brief. Research must be independent – there were a few examples of candidates within centres all referencing the same texts for their research and many more examples of all candidates within a centre referring to the same theories – indeed, sometimes using identical quotations. There were a lot of generalisations within candidates' research this year, for example when discussing theory many candidates simply referenced (for example) Stuart Hall's theory of Representation without any discussion as to how, or why it may be significant. Theory must be relevant and well anchored, and assessment must take into consideration the relevance and appropriate use of it.

Too many candidates researching print-based texts referred to colour codes in a haphazard and non-meaningful way, using sweeping generalisations. For example, the colour blue was referred to (by different candidates) as representing innocence, death, coldness, the future, trust, loyalty and calm. Few candidates really considered the context or substantiated their claims.

With reference to Brief 1, Option 2 and Brief 3, Option 2, too many candidates researched only magazine adverts or theatrical film posters – rather than researching other forms that they needed to produce (for example website leaderboards or skyscrapers).

It should be remembered that this is not a piece of textual analysis, but a piece of research to inform the rest of the NEA.

Planning

Whilst there was some excellent Planning submitted, it must adhere to the requirements of the Specification. There are no marks to be gained from submitting additional pages or from writing detailed notes to accompany the Planning texts. For audio visual work, candidates must submit a storyboard only – there are no marks for shooting scripts, written scripts, mood boards or location lists (for example). For print, all that is required is 4 draft pages for the Production. These must be produced using software; they must not be hand drawn. Candidates cannot be awarded marks for any additional materials.

Centres are reminded that Planning must link to the Research. On several occasions there appeared to be no link between the two at all. Planning must also reflect the requirements of the Assessment Objective and *demonstrate knowledge and understanding of genre, representation and audience*. This was not always the case which did lead to some over assessment.

Storyboards must be fit for purpose in order to making them a *relevant and appropriate* planning tool. Between 15 and 20 frames are recommended. Attention must be paid to the technical aspects of the storyboard (for example shot sizes, camera movement and transitions) and storyboards, especially for music videos, must make appropriate references to sound track.

Production

Many candidates produced some wonderfully creative texts – for example some brilliant music videos and some extremely well-crafted film advertising texts were seen by moderators - but there is still a tendency amongst a significant minority of centres to over reward Production work. More care must be taken when applying the mark scheme. There are three distinct columns under which candidates may be awarded marks and the requirements should also be linked back to the candidate's selected brief. For example, a candidate who has produced advertisements for Brief 1, Option 2 must have applied an understanding of representations of gender and age to be awarded (good) marks under column 2. An advertising campaign with no people in it cannot achieve this. Candidates producing audio visual texts should think more about mise-en-scene. For example, playgrounds may not be the most appropriate settings for a male cosmetic product; school corridors (with various posters etc.) may not suit an independent rock artist music video and teachers wearing school lanyards may not be the most appropriate characters in a teen horror film.

Some further points:

- Candidates working in pairs (a/v) must be responsible for either camera work or editing (with sound).
- Candidates working in pairs must submit an individual print piece (depending on the brief) and this must be assessed as part of their Production work.
- Dramatic music in a horror sequence alone cannot make it into a Band 3, 4 or 5 piece of work – camera work and editing must also demonstrate technical skills.
- Candidates must use original photographs in their print work (5 or 6 as a minimum, depending on the brief).

- Many candidates need to pay more attention to the industry and audience requirements of their brief. For example, too many horror films (Brief 3, Option 2) had 18 certificates when the specified audience is 16 – 25 and the young *professional* audience for Brief 1, Option 2 was often ignored.
- Candidates opting for Brief 2 must pay close attention to the details in column 3.

Reflective Analysis

The Reflective Analysis has a very specific purpose. Candidates must analyse and evaluate their Production work in relation to the 3 texts used in their Research. They should focus on the key genre conventions incorporated into their productions, the representation issues raised by the production and how media language (and other conventions) have been used to target the specified audience. Candidates who simply evaluate their own Production work with no reference to these elements are not adhering to the specification requirements and assessment here was often too generous.

Candidates who called their Reflective Analysis a 'Reflective Analysis' tended to produce much better work than those who called it an evaluation, a write-up or even a report. They were more focussed and coherent.

Summary of key points

- Candidates must adhere to the requirements of their selected brief.
- Research, Planning and Production should clearly link and work should develop in a logical sequence.
- Word limits must be adhered to for the Research and Reflective Analysis. Candidates who exceed the word limits (+/-10%) should be penalised by centres as outlined on page 51 of the specification.
- Production Assessment is outlined under three separate columns in the mark scheme, but candidates not have to be awarded within the same band for each column. Indeed, this may well not be the case.
- The Reflective Analysis must adhere to the requirements outlined on page 27 of the specification. Candidates must refer to all three texts selected for their research and refer to the bullet points outlined.

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UNIT 3: MEDIA IN THE GLOBAL AGE

General Comments

The paper provided a variety of questions which encompassed the specification of the subject. Candidates were instructed to engage with questions that entailed knowledge of industry, social/historical contexts and critical perspectives. The introduction of 'new' elements such as a question concerning video games, dedicated case studies and an emphasis on distinct critical perspectives has worked very well with centres universally understanding the fundamental requirements of the specification. Candidates found the paper accessible and there were strong responses across the cohort.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Television

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products

Question 1(a)

*How important are digital platforms to the success of television programmes? Compare the distribution of *Hinterland* and the **historical** crime drama you have studied.* [30]

This question required that candidates used the case study *Hinterland* along with their chosen **historical** drama in reference to the specification requirement that learners 'consider established media forms alongside more contemporary forms, developing an awareness of the relationship between media forms and online platforms'. Candidates discussed the essentiality of digital platforms for *Hinterland*. Answers looked at streaming services, but also the genesis of *Hinterland* within the context of genre and its funding (the idea that a motivating factor for investment in any modern crime drama is how global/digital ready the product is). Such factors did not apply to the historical texts. While some answers relied on how shows like *Prime Suspect* and *Cracker* have enjoyed new audiences due to the availability of streaming, the more successful answers challenged the question and contrasted old media paradigms with modern digital availability (candidates discussed the specifically British relevance of the aforementioned shows, and the captive audiences both programmes had). *Prime Suspect* was the favoured historical product, with *Cracker* second.

Question 1(b)

*How important is marketing to the television industry? Compare the marketing of *Hinterland* and the **European** crime drama you have studied.* [30]

This question aimed to cover the stipulation that learners understand the marketing of television dramas. Here candidates chose a European crime drama to compare with *Hinterland*. *The Bridge* was by far the most popular choice. The response to this question was more mixed than Question 1(a). Weaker candidates relied on listing features of the products' marketing at the expense of exploring the question's 'how important' proposition. Nonetheless, there were, again, varied approaches to this question: some candidates engaged with deep analysis of the marketing, looking at media language and representation, while others approached the question from a more industrial point of view. There were several, equally valid modes of response to this question. At the very bottom of the scale there was some misunderstanding of what was meant by 'marketing'.

Section B: Magazines

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products

Question 2(a)

*Explore how far the representations of gender in the **contemporary mainstream and historical magazines** you have studied reflect their historical contexts.* [30]

This question asked candidates to explore how far the representations of gender in their contemporary magazine and their historical magazine reflected their respective historical contexts. *Vogue* was the principle choice where historical products were concerned, with *Woman* and *Woman's Realm* being equal second. Judging by the confidence with which candidates approached this question - evidenced by the popularity of the choice and the outcomes - this was an accessible question. Candidates used *Men's Health* and *Cosmopolitan* as mainstream choices. Candidates were especially good at challenging the perspective that an older magazine was necessarily retrogressive and elaborated persuasively about how they felt some representations within the historical texts were reflective of second wave feminism. The use of critical perspectives here was especially evident, as was the sophisticated application of theory to develop points. Candidates were confident using skills of analysis to apply fluent discussion of representations to their arguments.

There was some – minimal - confusion regarding the descriptor 'contemporary mainstream', with certain candidates selecting their 'contemporary non-mainstream' magazine to answer the question.

Although page 36 of the specification clearly states that the contemporary magazines should be online versions, almost overwhelmingly the cohort discussed print editions of the magazines, with an emphasis on 'covers' and 'cover stars'

Question 2(b)

*Explore how far the representation of issues in the **mainstream and non-mainstream magazines** you have studied reflect their social contexts.* [30]

This question was not as prolifically answered as its counterpart. However, candidates who did attempt this question did so by successfully applying the issue led feminism of *Cosmopolitan* to the progressive racial ideologies of *Pride*, or, as several candidates argued convincingly and with sensitivity against what they saw as the limited sexual stereotyping of *Attitude*, which focussed more on male beauty rather than the perceived socio-political content of *Pride* and indeed *Cosmopolitan*. Responses were fortified with clear and purposeful application of detail from products which gave credence to arguments. Again, critical perspective enabled candidates to further elaborate their arguments.

There was a similar problem with the use of print magazine exemplar, rather than online press, to answer the question.

Section C: Video Games

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of media

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products

Question 3(a)

*David Gauntlett suggests that the media provide audiences with resources which they use to construct identities. Explore this idea in relation to **two** video games that you have studied.*

[30]

The variety of responses to his question focussed mainly on the potential for in-game choices, which allows audiences to choose avatars and modify them using in-game technology, applying Gauntlett's theory to explain escapist and identification pleasures. More ambitious answers took in gaming culture and how social media also provides a culture for constructing identities. There was ample evidence that the video games part of the course was taught well, with responses incorporating textual poaching (modification) and the ludic, sandbox qualities of games. Almost every candidate discussed *GTA* in the videogame section, with a healthy spread of the other options as supporting texts. *Minecraft* and *The Sims* proved to be useful options for this question.

Question 3(b)

*Albert Bandura suggests that audiences develop attitudes through modelling by the media. Explore this idea in relation to **two** video games that you have studied.*

[30]

Less complex answers applied the products to Bandura in a comprehensive attempt to support the effects theory. However, far more candidates expounded upon or even challenged Bandura's theory by arguing against it - identifying flaws with the effects theory and explicating the interactive nature of games as a contrast to passive reception. Candidates surveyed the positive applications of modelling, by writing in detail about skill-based learning. There was a pleasing utilisation of other critical perspectives to elucidate Bandura, most notably Baudrillard and Van Zoonen, when candidates argued the immersive quality of games and what they saw as potentially damaging representations, respectively.

In general candidates answered Section 3 last, which occasionally resulted in truncated responses as time ran out.

Summary of key points

More successful candidates had a secure and applicable understanding of critical perspectives and were able to use these theories across the paper in a variety of interesting and purposeful ways.

The modern magazines should be taught with respect for their digital distribution, an aspect of these products which was for the main part overlooked when discussing historical and social contexts.

Certain responses floundered during questions which ostensibly focussed on industry. There were several ways in to these questions, which could have focussed on the minutia and subsequent appeal of marketing campaigns, the overall picture of digital distribution or marketing, or indeed the global suitability of products. Learners must be encouraged to evaluate questions and adapt their understanding accordingly.

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UNIT 4: CREATING A CROSS-MEDIA PRODUCTION

General Comments

Centres and candidates had clearly worked effectively to fulfil the requirements of the new Specification. It was pleasing to see that the full range of briefs had been utilised and the majority of candidates had engaged well with the different elements of the briefs; some excellent work was evident. A small number of centres had engaged less successfully with the new Specification and did not adhere to the requirements of the briefs specified, which generally meant those candidates could not fully address the assessment criteria. This often resulted in these candidates being over-rewarded. Most commonly, elements of the secondary interrelated product were sometimes missing from candidates' production work. Centres are advised that they must select one of the briefs outlined in the Specification and candidates must complete all elements of that brief. The majority of centres appeared to have offered candidates free choice of brief although some took a whole centre approach. More centres opted for Brief 2 than Brief 1.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Administration

There was clear evidence of good practice. For example: evidence of internal moderation; assessor annotation which clearly detailed the reasoning behind marks awarded; the inclusion of word counts and generally well-presented folders. However, there were also some centres who failed to annotate candidates' work, or who used annotations in the form of advisory comments to the candidate, making it difficult for moderators to understand how and why the assessment criteria had been applied or how marks awarded were arrived at.

The coversheets must be completed in some detail - by both assessors and candidates, although not all centres complied with this requirement. Centres should note that the GDPR consent form should be completed with participant details, even if they do not give permission for the work to be shared as a resource.

A significant minority of centres submitted work late, sometimes extremely so, without an agreed extension, or presented candidates' work without appropriate attention to detail as outlined above. This makes the moderation process difficult and raises issues with regards to parity across centres which may necessitate marks being adjusted to ensure uniformity of assessment.

Investigative Research

The most effective investigative research work demonstrated the following:

- Research clearly focused on a product comparable to candidates' chosen cross-media production
- The comparable product was produced by the publishers/broadcasters stipulated in the Specification

- One edition of a magazine or episode of a TV programme was chosen and analysed effectively
- Research was clearly focused on *one* key concept of *either* genre, narrative or representation
- The use of clearly referenced sources such as textbooks, journals, essays and academically credible websites cited in a bibliography of at least 5 items.
- Critical perspectives which were *applied* to candidates' primary research; the best work used the Harvard referencing system
- Clearly drawn, perceptive conclusions which demonstrated an understanding of a key media concept

Common issues identified through the moderation process which limited the effectiveness of the Investigative Research and, in some cases, created problems throughout all elements of candidates' work were:

- Research that focused on an overview/history of a product; this was especially apparent where candidates had chosen Brief 2
- Investigations that attempted to explore more than key concept
- Research which encouraged a focus on audience, rather than on a key concept as outlined in the Specification.
- An over-reliance on user-generated sources, which lack academic credibility, such as Wikipedia, Slideshare, Blogspot or Prezi.
- Overuse of sources that did not have a clear conceptual or media focus.
- A lack of referencing skills which, in the worst cases, could result in issues of plagiarism.
- No bibliography produced
- Description rather than analysis, for example, description of the basic visual codes or a simple narration of the plot at the expense of exploration and analysis of the technical features of the texts.
- Audience research, in the form of surveys, questionnaires and focus groups, which is unnecessary and unlikely to aid conceptual understanding.
- Reference to candidates' intentions for their own cross-media production

Development Outline

These were generally done well. The most effective displayed the following features:

- The Development Outline was presented as an extension to the Investigative research
- Findings from the Investigative Research were clearly outlined; bullet points were used effectively here
- A clear sense of how the findings would be developed into the Production. Again, bullet points proved a useful structure
- Word limits were adhered to which helped to focus candidates

Some issues which limited the effectiveness of the Development Outline:

- A significant minority outlined the production process rather than how investigation findings would develop their cross-media production
- Some candidates summed up their research findings without exemplifying how it would develop their cross-media production
- Some candidates referred to additional research

Cross-media Production

The most effective Cross-media productions displayed the following features:

- Effectively demonstrated realisation of the brief, with all elements given equal consideration.
- Clearly demonstrated development of research findings and conclusions into the cross-media production artefact/s.
- An effective understanding of, and use of, the relevant codes and conventions of the media forms produced, including their genre and industry contexts - most commonly achieved through detailed analysis and clearly outlined intentions in the Development Outline.
- Purposeful construction of representations demonstrated through sustained use of appropriate media language.
- Levels of technical competence appropriate for the marks awarded, for example, effective editing.
- Adherence to the requisite amount of original footage and images.
- All elements of the cross-media production, including the inter-related elements, are of an equal standard.

Common issues which limited the effectiveness of the Production:

- Limited or tenuous application of the research findings and conclusions; most often where candidates failed to investigate an appropriate comparable product.
- Failure to adhere to the relevant codes and conventions of the media forms produced, most commonly with the print-based productions, where there were issues such as missing page numbers, pricing or edition numbers; usually due to candidates not having analysed appropriate texts.
- Lower levels of technical competence than the specification requires.
- An insufficient amount of original images or footage.
- Candidates failing to produce all elements of the brief.

Critical Analysis

The most effective evaluations demonstrated the following features:

- A clear application of knowledge and understanding of media language, representations, industries and audiences and how they impacted the cross-media production.
- An effective ability to evaluate the use of key media concepts in their cross-media production work in relation to the research findings and conclusions.
- Ideas communicated effectively.

Less effective evaluations were characterised by:

- Discussion of the production processes such as filming and editing.
- Discussion of the strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement of the production element.
- The introduction and discussion of new research / texts which did not appear in the investigation.

Summary of key points

There was some generous assessment, in a few cases significantly so. While there were some issues with the Development Outline and Critical Analysis most generosity was observed with the Investigative Research and the Cross-Media Production

Generous assessment of the Investigative Research frequently occurred where candidates failed to incorporate and apply theoretical opinion to primary research in the form of detailed textual analysis. Candidates found it challenging to demonstrate the required conceptual understanding where they had not made clear, effective reference to appropriate theory. A minority of centres tended to over-reward candidates who drew research purely from inappropriate, on-line sources such as Wikipedia, Slideshare and blogs; it should be noted that these sources are often simply mediated opinion on theorists and candidates are better advised to access the original theorists' work. There were also issues where candidates failed to investigate a product comparable with their cross-media production; this was most evident where candidates had investigated magazines from publishers other than those stated in the briefs.

Where Cross-Media Productions were over-rewarded this tended to be because they lacked the codes and conventions of the form produced or lacked the technical competence for the marks awarded. It would be most useful for centres to pay particular attention to the technical skill highlighted at each level; particularly the higher levels. Where the codes and conventions of the form produced were not apparent, it was possibly because candidates had not investigated an appropriate comparable product. This was particularly apparent with print-based work, whether as the main element or as the secondary integrated elements. There were also issues with some candidates failing to adhere to the required number of original images. Audio-visual work was generally more accurately assessed although there were some issues with candidates not adhering to the genre codes and conventions of the comparable product analysed as part of their investigative research. It was also the case that some work was not long enough. A significant minority of candidates did not complete all elements of the Cross-Media Production and centres are advised that where this is the case the assessor comments and marks awarded should reflect this.



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