



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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

SUMMER 2022

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WJEC GCE MEDIA STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
AS UNIT 1: INVESTIGATING THE MEDIA

General Comments

It is apparent from papers viewed that this year's Unit 1 examination was engaged with confidently overall as it was evidently accessible to candidates across each question. It was so pleasing to see that learners were familiar with the expectations and demands of each question and the requirements of the assessment objectives. From this it can be said that on the whole learners were well prepared for the paper and managed their time effectively across the three sections.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Selling Images: Advertising

The unseen resource for this question was an audio-visual advertisement for the British Red Cross charity organisation. The advert promoted their *The Power of Kindness* campaign.

Q.1 Explore how media language communicates messages and values in this advertisement. [40]

In your answer you should consider:

- **technical, visual and audio codes**
- **the effect of purpose on the messages and values.**

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of aspects of media language from the conceptual framework.

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of aspects of media language from the conceptual framework to analysis of the unseen audio-visual advertisement.

The question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of media language and the way in which this language communicates messages and values. The bullet points served to focus responses on the key elements of media language and the way in which these different elements influence meaning. The second bullet point framed the messages and values within the context of the advertisement's *purpose*: that of a charity organisation.

The advertisement proved to be a rich text that was accessible for candidates who were clearly well prepared for the question. It was encouraging to see that candidates across the band range could analyse the advertisement with references to details and through the use of subject specific terminology.

Candidates were able refer to specific elements of media language appropriate to moving image media such as: camera shots, different aspects of mise-en-scene and both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Responses engaged with the ways that the language choices made influenced meanings created and discussed both purpose and effect.

In line with the specification responses showed knowledge and understanding of charity advertising which informed analysis undertaken in a purposeful way. Learners clearly understood the contents of a charity advert and were able to comment on typicality of the features and/or the extent to which the advertisement challenged conventionality. The best responses explored the advertisement in thorough detail engaging with the interrelationship of the different elements of media language such as the interplay between the camera shots, the mise-en-scene and the audio codes employed. Perceptive points were made regarding the charity organisation's aims and the ways in which the advert was encoded to engage audiences in different ways whether through provoking an emotional or altruistic response. Some responses engaged with the structure of the advert providing a sense of overview of how the messages communicated a sense of narrative and outcome linked to purpose while others focused in on representations within the advertisement and how they linked to the messages and values of the organisation. Some responses argued that the representations were linked to the potential audiences that the advert was likely to be decoded by. All valid points related to the question were rewarded as it was interesting to read the wide range of insightful points that were explored. At the top end of the assessment descriptors the most successful responses offered a perceptive and detailed exploration with a range of points that developed a point of in relation to the question and which addressed the bullet points. Weaker responses fell into description or were limited by brevity and limited coverage.

Although the use of critical perspectives was not specifically required with this question, they did feature quite significantly across responses and bands. Critical perspectives applied included: Barthes, Hall (reception theory), Gerbner and Bandura. Critical perspectives were used in different ways as some responses adopted a semiotic approach throughout, others used Hall to explore the ways in which the advert was encoded to communicate dominant messages and values; some considered how audiences' perceptions of the world were potentially being shaped through the representations of kindness within the advert so applying Gerbner and with Bandura there was an argument that positive behaviours demonstrated within the advert could lead to the imitation of good deeds in keeping with aims of the advert.

Overall, the resource material allowed for interesting, detailed and varied responses. Learners were well prepared for an audio-visual resource as evident through the references to specific details within the advertisement. Best responses engaged with all aspects of the question and used subject specific language in order to communicate their knowledge and understanding. The vast majority of the responses were of an appropriate length for a 40-mark question. It was a pleasure to see learners respond so well to this question.

Section B: News in the Online Age

Q.2 (a) How have technological developments changed radio news? [10]

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

Question 2 (a) asked candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ways in which technological developments have changed radio news meeting AO1 requirements only. Responses were expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of areas from the conceptual framework such as:

- how the consumption of news has evolved from early radio to its current online form
- how audiences can be reached through different media technologies and platforms
- the impact of digitally convergent media on the production, distribution and circulation of news
- how audiences are able to interact with radio news.

Candidates clearly understood how technological developments have changed news. However, in some instances this was not linked to radio news which is specified in the question. Candidates were confident about how the consumption of news has evolved and moved online but in too many instances this was limited to a focus on new technologies with scant attention to this in relation to radio. Some responses remained very generalised and while the focus for assessment is AO1 knowledge and understanding with no requirement to refer to set products the use of examples to support points can help to develop the understanding element as *explanation* is expected. The best responses had a confident understanding of technological developments and were able to relate this to radio news specifically. In the stronger responses there was a clear sense that radio news had evolved online and how this had implications for news consumption, audience interaction and news distribution. Although the use of critical perspectives was not required there were references to Clay Shirky's End of Audience theory and when used appropriately this helped to further develop an understanding of changes to radio news consumption and the audience's relation to news in the online age. Most answers were of an appropriate length for a ten-mark question and covered a range of points.

(b) Explore how audiences are positioned to respond to a 'hard' news story in your set newspaper.

In your answer you must use Stuart Hall's reception theory. [20]

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and critical perspectives of the 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 audiences are positioned to respond to a hard news story in the set newspaper. It was a requirement to use Stuart Hall's reception theory in the response. The specification states that at least one significant event must be studied and learners must consider how the event is represented. 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: Ukraine and Russia, Black Lives Matter protests, Boris Johnson and 'partygate,' and the Florida mass shootings. The majority of learners had studied either *The Guardian* or *The Daily Mirror*. The most successful answers showed excellent knowledge and understanding of how audiences are positioned to respond to a news story within a specific set newspaper. As the products are set and taught there was evidence that learners understood the views and values of the news organisation and were able to confidently explore how these shaped the process of news reporting. The stronger responses were able to explore fully how their set newspaper had encoded the story in ways that positioned audiences to take a dominant-hegemonic reading. At the top end responses referred explicitly to Stuart Hall's theory and used very detailed analysis to explore the encoding process. Confident responses were able to marry the requirements of both assessment objectives in a sophisticated manner making very perceptive and at times subtle points related to audience responses. Responses explored aspects of language used in headlines and copy, the use of photographs and captions and the relationship of written codes to visual codes in the creation of meaning. Responses in the middle band articulated a more straightforward aspects of audience with some straightforward references to the newspaper studied. Within some responses at the lower end knowledge and understanding of Hall remained implicit as did understanding of *how* audiences are positioned to respond. Also, less successful was a straightforward account of Stuart Hall's theory and the hypothetical responses that audiences could potentially take without referring to specific details of the newspaper studied.

Overall, this question was engaged with quite competently with few rubric infringements. The responses showed that candidates knew how to approach the question; they understood the requirements of both assessment objectives and the need to refer to the set newspaper to support points made.

Section C: Film Industries – from Wales to Hollywood

Q.3 (a) Explain the marketing strategies used by the film industry to attract audiences.

Refer to the set Hollywood film to support your points. [10]

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

The question asked candidates to explain the marketing strategies used by the film industry, Hollywood, to attract audiences. It was expected that responses would demonstrate knowledge and understanding related to the following:

- how film industries target, attract, reach, address and construct audiences through marketing

- the impact of digitally convergent media on marketing strategies
- the significance of economic factors and budget to the marketing of films
- the relationship between technological change and marketing strategies
- the importance of genre to the marketing of Hollywood productions.

Many found this question accessible with the best answers showing excellent knowledge of industry and marketing with points made supported with specific and detailed references to their set Hollywood film. Best responses articulated their understanding of production companies and the effect of budget on the marketing strategies employed. Specific marketing strategies were explored with references to detailed elements that would attract audiences. Different audiences that were targeted were also broken down and explored. In the best answers knowledge was accurate and a wide range of points were made. A wide range of points allowed for the consideration of how multiple strategies are often employed to reach a range of audiences from the use of the more traditional genre, stars, trailers and posters to more recent online media promotion and digital marketing strategies. Some answers however had a tendency towards description and while there was understanding evident responses lacked accurate and specific knowledge to support the understanding. Some candidates did not address the **marketing strategies** part of the question and instead focussed on how the film attracted audiences and so referring to aspects of the film itself with no reference to how the film was marketed. It is important that learners explicitly practise how to approach questions so that the different elements are firstly identified and then addressed. Aside from this the question was on the whole unproblematic and candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the film industry in relation to the set film product studied.

(b) How is film language used to appeal to audiences in the set film made in Wales? Explore a key scene from the film in your answer. [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

The AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives are equally weighted in this question with ten marks for knowledge and understanding and ten marks for application of knowledge and understanding through knowledge of the set products studied. Key assessment areas from the specification referenced in this question include

AO1

- film language such as camerawork (distance, angle, movement), mise-en-scène (settings, locations, costume, props), editing (continuity editing) and sound (diegetic, non-diegetic and post-production sound)
- how the different elements of film language, and the combination of elements, influence and communicate meanings
- genre:
 - genre codes, conventions and iconography; principles of repetition and variation of a repertoire of elements; hybridity and intertextuality; the significance of challenging and/or subverting genre conventions

- narrative construction, structures, techniques and conventions.

AO2

Responses will apply knowledge and understanding of the concept of media language and audience on analysis of a key scene from the Welsh film studied.

It was pleasing to see that centres chose products across the option range and candidates could respond confidently to the question using the film that they had studied. The best responses were very detailed in their analysis offering perceptive and detailed explorations of a key scene. This analysis was linked to an informed consideration of how this use of language would create appeal to audiences. At the top end there was a clear focus on the different aspects of film language such as camerawork (distance, angle, movement), mise-en-scène (settings, locations, costume, props), editing (continuity editing) and sound (diegetic, non-diegetic and post-production sound) and the different ways in which the elements created appeal which varied according to the film studied and the key scene chosen. To include a few examples, in the horror film *Don't Knock Twice* film language was explored often in relation to genre expectations and the creation of suspense and jump scares. In *Submarine* points were often focussed on the use of voice over and the relationship between the main character and the audience. Interesting points were made with *The Library Suicides* and the use of framing that served to dupe the audience until the final twist and so on. It was clear that the films were studied closely in class in relation to the concept areas. Although reference to critical perspectives was not a requirement of the question, Barthes was applied as part of a semiotic analysis, and there were references to Neale and genre and Todorov with narrative. These references did in the most part serve to support a response in relation to the question asked.

Responses were less successful where candidates did not refer to a key scene and instead reference to lots of different parts of the film as this led to a more superficial consideration of the use of film language rather than a detailed exploration. In some cases, responses did not link their analysis to the question's focus on *how film language* is used to appeal while other responses referred to marketing and appeal rather than a key scene in the film. There were also surprisingly some candidates who did not seem to understand what was meant by film language, which is under media language in the film section of the specification. These candidates instead focused on the language used in the film with references to whether the characters had accents or not. However, overall candidates were confident with their set film products and were for the most part able to respond appropriately.

Summary of key points

The areas of the paper were taught well as learners knew what was expected of them in terms of assessment objectives and response length. As a result, there was good time management across the paper and there were only a few rubric infringements. There was some strong use of critical perspectives across questions as learners were keen to demonstrate what they had learned and they were able to adeptly apply them.

- candidates need to address *all* of the facets of a question in their response
- in Q.2 (a) and Q.3 (a) questions learners should avoid over generalising and instead use specific examples to support points made
- more successful candidates refer to specific and carefully selected detail in relation to their set products.

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AS 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 adapted specification by selecting the appropriate brief and option for their candidates. Very few centres submitted incomplete work for moderation. 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 (this is understandable post-pandemic), 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. Work that falls outside the word limit cannot be assessed.

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: surname, research; surname, planning etc. Tags like media work, coursework, John's work, Kate's final draft etc. are not helpful.

Cover sheets were accurately completed in the main, making it easier to see how assessment had been applied. A notable exception was the lack of dates and initials for reviewing the work from a small minority of centres as well as completing and signing of Section C and D. Both of these are essential. Annotation on the work itself would be helpful to the moderation process so that moderators can better understand how centres have awarded marks.

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 candidates' Production, as well as the Planning under normal circumstances. Consequently, the materials selected by candidates for their research must be relevant to the brief — there were some examples of candidates researching texts unrelated to their Production. As mentioned above, there were several examples of candidates who had far exceeded the upper word limit (4000 words plus in some cases). However, centre comments and the marks awarded did not reflect this. Work that falls outside the word limit cannot be assessed.

Theory must be relevant and well anchored, and assessment must take into consideration the relevance and application of it.

Too many candidates did not focus on all the media concepts assessed in this element — genre, representation and audience.

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 chose to produce (for example digital banner posters).

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 this was not assessed this year due to the Summer 2022 adaptations, several centres presented Planning tasks for moderation, whilst a small minority awarded marks for this element.

Production

Once again, 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. Technical skills were also generously awarded in some cases, particularly where pixelated and blurred images were used.

Some further points:

- candidates must use original photographs in their print work (5 or 6 as a minimum, depending on the brief, usually; 3 this year)
- 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) continue to have 18 certificates when the specified audience is 16 - 25 and the young professional audience for Brief 1, Option 2, was sometimes 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) has 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 as a result. Some candidates referenced texts not studied in their Research.

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 often more focused 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 do 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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A2 UNIT 3: MEDIA IN THE GLOBAL AGE

General Comments

Due to disruptions in teaching time as a result of national lockdowns, the Unit 3 paper was adapted to consider the needs of candidates and restrictions were placed on the specification for 2022. Centres were instructed not to teach the European Crime Drama, the Historical Magazine and only one Action Game for the final section. All centres abided by these alterations to the rubric.

Nonetheless, the paper still 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. Centres understood 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.

Q.1 (a) 'Meaning depends on the difference between opposites' (Stuart Hall). Use Hall's theory of representation to explore characters in *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 'learners should have an awareness of the historical significance of television, its evolution within the media and how it changes in response to industry and audience factors, as well as social, cultural and historical contexts'. Candidates discussed the way in which the characters in *Hinterland* were placed in opposition to create narrative and/or ideological meaning. Answers looked in general at gender inequality, although also at class systems and the specific plot details of Catrin John's 'secret life'. Close attention was similarly applied to the historical texts. Due to the conceptual nature of the product, candidates looked at how men and women are placed within clear oppositions within *Prime Suspect*, and more sophisticated answers tackled the corruption within the police which blurred the binary nature of law and criminality. More successful candidates referred in knowledgeable detail to media language: how the camera, sound or other technical codes were used to present characters. *Prime Suspect* was the favoured historical product, with *Cracker* second. *Morse* was a close third.

Overall, understanding of Hall was purposeful, but intermittently candidates would refer pointedly to Hall's perspectives on audience, which is a distinct perspective to Hall's theories regarding stereotyping.

- (b) **'Patriarchy is a system that insists that males are inherently dominating' (bell hooks). Use hooks' theory of gender representation to explore characters in Hinterland and the historical crime drama you have studied [30]**

This question aimed to cover 'how representations of place and social/cultural groups, including gender, are constructed'. This was a very popular question which perhaps indicates candidate response and interest in the perspectives of hook. When candidates chose a historical crime drama to compare with Hinterland, again Prime Suspect was by far the most popular choice. The response to this question was again successful. Weaker candidates were allowed a way into the question due to the visible gender politics of the products. More confident candidates probed further, examining how the historical crimes in Hinterland happened to girls, for example, or how the nature of the criminal activity in Prime Suspect was a grim manifestation of misogyny. The rich representations within the products allowed for varied approaches to this question: more sophisticated responses engaged with deep analysis of media language and representation, while others approached the question applying straightforward, but suitably selected, plot details.

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

- Q.2 (a) How important are digital platforms to reaching an maintaining a variety of audiences? Compare the distribution of the mainstream and the non-mainstream magazines you have studied. [30]**

This question asked candidates to explore the mainstream magazine and the non-mainstream magazine studied 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 both products. Cosmopolitan and Men's Health were the principal choices for the mainstream magazine, while there was a healthy range of choices for the non-mainstream magazine. Candidates were adept at discussing how the content and respective ideologies of magazines position audiences, although only more sophisticated answers fully acknowledged the industry implications of the question. Furthermore, more successful candidates engaged in deeper media analysis of the texts. Occasionally, there were analytical references to print iterations of the products wherein candidates deconstructed front covers, despite page 36 of the specification clearly stating that the contemporary magazines studied should be online versions.

- (b) How important are specialised audiences to the magazine industry? Compare how the mainstream and non-mainstream magazines you have studied reflect the needs of different audiences. [30]**

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 approached this question with confidence and a strong sense of purpose, successfully applying the content of their chosen products to the respective social contexts of the products' target audience. Responses used clear application of detail from products which developed arguments. More sophisticated candidates wrote about how media institutions exploit the needs of audiences via advertising and idealised representations. This approach was particularly evident when mainstream magazines and their commercial nature was considered, and candidates also referred to the specific advertisements contained in *Attitude* and *Pride*. Critical perspectives were used judiciously here to further responses, and, once again, more successful candidates engaged in deeper media analysis of the texts and the way in which media language and mode of address communicates meaning to audiences. 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

- Q.3 (a) How far do representations of ethnicity in video games reflect cultural contexts? Explore one action-led game and one game in another genre you have studied. [30]**

GTA was a very popular choice here, although there were some very interesting explorations of Tomb Raider and Lara Croft's Caucasian ethnicity, and how within the narrative of the game, such an ethnicity could be applied to cultural contexts of imperialism and white privilege. Regarding the choice of game in another genre, Minecraft and The Sims proved to be useful options for this question. Cooking Mama was a niche selection, but candidates wrote very well on the cultural implications of the central representations within that product. The variety of responses to this question focussed mainly on the use of negative stereotyping within games, although more ambitious answers regarded the medium of gaming and the knowing cultural satire at the centre of GTA. Exploration and application of how games use media language, and subject specific terminology, almost always proved to support and bolster responses.

- (b) How far do audience responses to video games reflect cultural contexts? Explore one action-led game and one game in another genre you have studied. [30]**

Candidates approached this question from several different angles, providing a selection of successful responses. A lot of candidates applied Bandura, looking at how video games may impact upon certain audiences.

At times this approach was limiting, as there was a fundamental misunderstanding of both the question's requirements and the concept of cultural contexts (i.e. explicating how media affects audiences, not how the media may reflect audience contexts). In the specification it states that candidates should learn how media products are shaped or informed by particular cultural influences such as genres, styles, movements and the work of other media producers.

However, more candidates explored simulacra and fan ownership of products, delving into modification and online gaming/streaming as mass media endeavours. The games in another genre offered rich avenues of examination, with candidates discussing responses to the ideologies of Sims and the educational implications of Minecraft. 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 and format.

It is imperative that media contexts – social, cultural and historical – are taught with fealty to their definitions on page 12 of the specification.

Candidates should be encouraged to apply considered evaluation of how media products use media language to create meaning.

Candidates should be encouraged to evaluate questions and recognise their polysemic nature, before adapting their understanding accordingly.

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A2 UNIT 4: CREATING A CROSS-MEDIA PRODUCTION

General Comments

Centres and candidates had worked effectively to fulfil the requirements of the specification which included incorporating the Summer 2022 adaptations. The adaptations only affected the Cross-Media Production for this Series. This meant that there was no assessment of the second part of the Cross-Media Production and learners were required to create one media product only. Timings were reduced for Brief 1 and the number of pages/images required were reduced for Brief 2. For the most part, the adaptations were followed, but a minority of centres did produce audio visual work which exceeded the required time limits and submitted more than the required number of pages for Brief 2. Centres are to be reminded that only work which falls within the specification limits can be assessed.

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates had engaged well with the different elements of the briefs and some excellent work was evident. A small number of centres had engaged less successfully with the specification and did not adhere to the requirements outlined for each element of this Unit, meaning that those candidates could not fully address the assessment criteria. This often resulted in these candidates being over-rewarded.

Most centres appeared to have offered candidates free choice of brief, with some taking a whole centre approach. The majority of centres opted for Brief 2, the print option, as opposed to Brief 1, this year but this could most likely be attributed to Covid restricting candidates' ability to undertake all the requirements of a film brief. Partially completed productions were accepted this year, but minimal evidence of incomplete work was seen, which is a credit to centres and candidates who endeavoured to submit a complete folio of work for moderation in this most challenging of examination years.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Administration

This was generally well executed, with plenty of evidence of good practice, including assessor annotation which clearly justified how marks were awarded; the use of appropriate file formats and well-presented folders were observed overall. However, there were also some centres who failed to annotate candidates' work or include summative comments, making it difficult for moderators to understand how and why the assessment criteria had been applied or how marks had been awarded. It is a requirement that the coversheets are completed in detail by both assessors and candidates, although not all centres complied with this and, in these instances, cover sheets were incomplete. In some cases, many of the assessor comments were generic and lifted word for word from the specification, without any personalisation to the individual candidate. 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 small minority of centres submitted work late or failed to upload all folders requested in the sample.

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

There were no changes to the requirements of the Investigative Research for this series, according to the 2022 adaptations.

The most effective investigative research work demonstrated the following:

- research focused on a product comparable to candidates' chosen 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, or similar referencing systems
- 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 (Print)
- too great a focus on industry research, at the expense of conceptual research
- investigations that attempted to explore more than one key concept
- investigations that researched more than one product
- investigations that were too brief and, therefore, self-limiting due to a lack of exploration of the concept chosen for research
- research which encouraged a focus on audience, rather than on a key concept, as outlined in the specification
- overuse of sources that did not have a clear conceptual or media focus
- 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
- reference to candidates' intentions for their own production.

Development Outline

These were generally well written and adhered to the expected requirements. It is worth noting that the Development Outline and the Investigative Research are two discreet tasks and should be submitted for moderation as such. Some candidates incorporated a final paragraph to the Investigative Research outlining their findings, alongside intentions for their production, which is not the requirement for this element.

The most effective displayed the following features:

- key findings from the Investigative Research were clearly outlined, in either bullet point or continuous prose; either was acceptable
- a clear sense of how the findings would be developed into the Production
- word limits were adhered to which helped to focus candidates.

Some issues which limited the effectiveness of the Development Outline:

- a minority outlined the production process as well as the completed production rather than focus on 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 not discussed in the Investigative Research.

Cross-Media Production

The Cross-Media Production is the element of the specification which had been adapted for this series. This meant that there was no assessment of the second part of the Cross-Media Production and learners were required to create one media product only.

The most effective Productions displayed the following features:

- an effective realisation of the brief, with all elements given equal consideration
- clearly demonstrated development of research findings and conclusions into the production artefact/s
- effective use of the relevant codes and conventions of the media forms produced, including their genre and industry contexts; detailed intentions in the Development Outline helped achieve this
- 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, appropriate shot choice, effective layout and design
- inclusion of the required amount of original footage and images
- all elements of the production are of an equal standard.

Common issues which limited the effectiveness of the Production included:

- limited or tenuous application of the research findings and conclusions; most often where candidates failed to investigate an appropriate comparable product, or more than one 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 number 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 production
- an effective ability to evaluate the use of key media concepts in the production work in relation to the research findings and conclusions
- ideas communicated effectively with appropriately selected and effectively applied critical perspectives
- consistently and effectively used media language.

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

The key message from this series is that candidates must adhere to the requirements of their chosen brief in order to fully meet the requirements set out by this specification and thus meet the aims and objectives of the assessment criteria. Overall, it appeared that the Investigative Research had been well taught. Many candidates were able to demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of their chosen concept and used that concept to structure an effective analysis of their chosen research product. Critical Perspectives were generally well applied with very little evidence of theory downloading, which was encouraging. Where this was apparent, or where there was a lack of relevant and appropriate theory, it was difficult for candidates to demonstrate the required understanding of their chosen concept.

Those candidates who reached the higher assessment bands had selected appropriate theorists relevant to their chosen concepts and were able to use these aspects to structure a more effective and detailed textual analysis of the product chosen for research. Another feature which dominated work in the higher bands was the inclusion of a wide range of subject-specific terminology, which was apparent across each written element of Unit 4. However, there was still evidence of some generous assessment, and in some cases this was significant. Whilst there were some issues with the Development Outline and the Critical Analysis, the most frequent over-rewarding was in relation to the Investigative Research and Production. In many instances, the Investigative Research had been generously assessed where candidates failed to apply Critical Perspectives to primary research in the form of detailed textual analysis. Some candidates' work was limited by brevity; in being significantly under the word count the opportunity for exploring the chosen concept in detail was lost and thus self-penalising. Making full use of the word count is to be encouraged to present as much of the research findings as possible.

It was encouraging to see that this year, very few candidates drew research purely from inappropriate, on-line sources such as Wikipedia, Slideshare and blogs. Original theorists' work was more often referenced, as expected in an academic investigation. It was pleasing to see so much wide-ranging research also. A very small minority of candidates did not include a bibliography, as required.

A few 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.

Productions tended to be over-rewarded for two reasons; where they lacked the codes and conventions of the form produced or lacked the technical competence for the marks awarded and included blurred or pixilated images, cover lines cropped off the page, text covering the main image, placement of images and copy in print work. In some cases, 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 particular to print-based work. There were also issues with some candidates failing to adhere to the required number of original images.

Candidates who achieved the higher assessment bands had paid particular attention to the technical skill highlighted in those levels. Whilst far less candidates opted for the Audio-visual brief this year, those that did were more accurately assessed. The issues which arose from the audio-visual productions tended to be related to 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 over the required time limits.

A small minority of candidates did not complete all elements of Unit 4 but in general, awarding reflected this.



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