MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/01
Foundation Portfolio

Key messages

To successfully complete this coursework component, candidates should:

- Keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project, their final artefact meeting the requirements of their chosen brief, and a creative critical reflection upon their work.
- Aim to complete these elements to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools.
- Ensure the blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

Individual candidate Record Cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective and strand. If candidates have worked in groups, comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

General comments

This was the first session of the revised 9607 syllabus and most centres have taken on board the new elements of the syllabus; in this case the new Assessment Objectives, mark criteria, and reduced total marks available. However, some centres appear to still be using the previous mark scheme and awarding marks out of one hundred. It is important that centres keep up to date with changes in the syllabus. To that end they should regularly check the school Support Hub and read, and act upon, any 'Syllabus Change' documents.

Centres and their cohorts have had another very difficult year due to the pandemic and are once again to be congratulated on producing a high standard of work in very difficult circumstances. Despite restrictions on contact and movement, candidates have risen to the challenge and produced some exceptionally creative work. Many have used the pandemic as a source of inspiration and employed their close families as actors or models to produce some very professional artefacts.

On the whole, centres engaged well with this component and candidates produced some excellent work, demonstrating detailed research into existing magazines and film openings, which fed into the planning and construction of their own media products. Many candidates demonstrated high levels of skill in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Many centres produced blog hubs (a centre blog or web page with candidates' names and numbers hyperlinked to their work), however, the number who did not seems to have increased for this session. Even if there are only two entries the use of a hub helps teachers monitor candidates' work and aids the moderation process. All centres should follow this good practice and clearly transcribe the URL of the hub on the Individual candidate Record Cards. All hyper-links in both the centre's hub and candidate blogs need to be checked carefully by centres to ensure that they are working.

The number of centres using website building platforms such as Wix for presenting candidate work is increasing. These platforms are often visually more impressive but often lack the functionality of dedicated blogging platforms. If centres do use these applications for blogging it is very important that candidates

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organise their work effectively. Blogs should be organised so that they read in a clear chronological order using date stamps if possible. The finished product (film opening or magazine pages) should be the first thing seen as the blog is opened so that it is clear to Moderators which is the final version. All elements should be clearly labelled. The best blogs are comprehensive, with candidates posting meaningful posts on a regular basis. Some candidates produced upwards of fifty meaningful posts. The most effective blogs demonstrated the whole process of the project from initial idea, through research into similar products, planning, production, and creative critical reflection. The least effective blogs were those presented on poorly organised websites, with often descriptive posts lacking in reflection and evaluation of the process of production.

All elements of the portfolio must be online, either on or linked to the blog for the moderation period. This session has seen an increased use of Google applications for presenting work. This is acceptable only if all documents are either unlocked or the Moderator is provided with a password for access. Much time was spent contacting centres to make work available for moderation after the submission deadline.

There are still centres sending Moderators DVDs, USBs and printouts in support of their online work, these are kindly requested not to do so in the future. Moderators only use online material as required by the syllabus; physical materials are not looked at.

Creative Critical Reflections

The new mark scheme draws heavily on the assessment of the Creative Critical Reflection (CCR). Therefore, candidates need to fully address the four set questions using a range of digital applications to demonstrate their skill, knowledge and understanding. Assessment Objective (AO) 2 calls upon candidates to analyse and evaluate their own work. Marks for this are awarded across both the CCR and the blog but the criteria explicitly refer to engaging with the set questions. If candidates do not engage with all of the questions it is difficult to move beyond Level 2. Assessment Objective (AO) 3 strand 4 awards marks purely for the technical and creative skills used to communicate ideas through the CCR. Therefore, centres should not be giving high level marks for this strand to candidates who produce CCRs that do not employ creative approaches to presenting this element.

There continues to be some excellent use of multi-media applications making use of a range of sources taken from the production process to fully explore the four set questions. The most successful candidates have allocated adequate time to the CCR and considered it an integral part of their portfolio; the least successful have rushed it and/or considered it a necessary chore following their production. Centres should encourage candidates to give equal value to each of the four questions. Some candidates start with a comprehensive and creative response to **Question 1** and regress to finish with a thin response to **Question 4**.

Research and Planning

The third strand of AO3 relates directly to the candidate's research and planning, and how this has led to the construction of the final product. Therefore, all research and planning materials should be posted to candidate blogs and made accessible to the Moderator.

The most effective research is that completed independently by the candidate/group. It is clearly relevant to the final product and the candidate can articulate how their research models have informed their production. The least effective is class work, where the whole class has analysed the same text which bears little or no relevance to the final product. Some candidates presented research into magazines when following the video brief and vice versa. This is relevant if presented as demonstrating the candidate's choice of brief but not as preparation for construction of the opposite brief.

There is no prescribed list of planning materials, but candidates should clearly demonstrate the process of production via their blog. The process should reflect professional practice where possible so should include those documents associated with magazine or film production. The most successful candidates present a wide range of materials which clearly show the development of the project. The least successful tend towards generalised descriptive comments about what they did, often in a diary-like format.

Products

Products are primarily assessed across the first two strands of AO3. Marks should be awarded for the application of technical skills and how these are used to communicate meaning. Products should demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of media language and key concepts.

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Magazines

The print brief continues to decline in popularity, especially as a whole centre choice. Candidates who attempted this brief generally fulfilled the requirements, with understanding of features of design, layout, font choice and size in evidence. Some candidates completed well organised and considered photo shoots resulting in some excellent original images. However, others would still benefit from support in this area. There still needs to be a wider range of appropriate images produced with some candidates simply presenting the minimum number of images required rather than considering what their magazine needed. Contents pages continue to be an issue with many needing to reflect the full content of the proposed magazine, not just a few pages. It is recommended that candidates compare their products to real magazine pages. Double page spreads require candidates to have had some training in journalistic technique. Copy was often poorly proofread, and, in some instances, meaning was not clearly communicated.

Whilst some centres continue to invest in appropriate technical tools for construction of media products, some candidates still need more support in building their skills with dedicated DTP software such as InDesign, Quark Xpress, Affinity Publisher etc.

Opportunities for interim feedback need to be built into the task so that candidates can benefit from the critical eye of peers and teachers, particularly in relation to how far they have carried through their research into codes and conventions for their own products. Analysis and evaluation of candidates' own work is an important element of the new mark scheme. Weaker productions often appear to be based on little or inappropriate research into existing products, sometimes taken from genres other than those of the proposed product.

Film openings

The video brief continues to be the most popular for this series, with the most effective products being carefully researched and planned. For the best film openings, candidates had researched professional work relevant to their own genre choice and had developed a systematic understanding of the institutional conventions of opening titles. Many candidates had successfully adapted their productions to consider country specific Covid-19 regulations. It was pleasing to see the creativity in overcoming issues, especially those involving isolation, where many candidates switched to domestic drama using their families as actors.

It is noted that centres are giving their candidates more opportunities to use appropriate technology. Many are showing the development of skills by producing and presenting well constructed preliminary exercises, which not only focus on camerawork, but also some lighting and sound recording techniques. However, some well constructed openings are still being let down by a lack of consideration of the importance of light and an effective soundscape.

When candidates work in groups, as permitted by the syllabus, it is important that all members' roles are clearly identifiable and that the centre has allocated marks appropriate to those roles. Comments on Individual candidate Record Cards should clearly identify how marks have been allocated according to candidate roles.

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/21
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which was based on an extract from *Killing Eve.*

Section B requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

General comments

There was a good spread of marks across both sections of the paper, with several candidates showing evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples and appropriate use of accurate terminology. While there were contemporary examples used in Section B to illustrate points, often candidates would generalise about their chosen case studies. The ability to address the key terms of the question, and to shape relevant knowledge towards fully answering it, was often not in evidence. The new mark scheme requires candidates to engage with theory and current media debate, which was often scant.

Section A

Question 1
Analyse how the extract from *Killing Eve* constructs meaning, including the specific representations of individuals, groups, events or places, through the following technical elements:

- **camera shots, angles, movement and composition**
- **sound**
- **mise-en-scène**
- **editing.**

There was evidence of sound understanding of technical skills, with most candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. Technical knowledge was often impressive across all four areas. However, some candidates simply identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This did not allow for opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently these candidates were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates could easily identify meaning, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. Often, candidates merely narrated what is seen on screen, leading to limited responses, rather than providing a deeper exploration of the connotations of the micro elements employed. In many cases, the core concept of representation was ignored, with candidates superficially focusing on the atmosphere of the extract. Centres

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should focus on the demands of the 5 strands of the mark scheme, ensuring that candidates are aware of concepts of representation, the exploration of social significances, and how to analyse texts underpinned with key theories and appropriate media terminology

There were some excellent responses at the higher end of the range, highlighting candidates' understanding of the ways in which meaning and representation is constructed through the use of different technical areas. There were some very sophisticated, analytical responses demonstrating an understanding of how meaning and representation is created, coupled with an excellent use of technical terminology. Often, candidates were able to link the technical codes with analysis of the potential representations of women as authoritative, disorganised, sadistic, professional/unprofessional. There were some excellent discussions of the extract as a self-aware, stylised postmodern genre with dark comedic elements, subverting genre expectations. The idea of subversion of expectations of gender was a key theme of the text.

Common weaknesses in responses were identifying technical codes, but not exploring how meaning is created; the tendency towards narrative or descriptive responses, rather than analysis; repeated points throughout or reduced analysis to one word; inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' or 'switch' instead of 'cut'). Some candidates managed to successfully apply theory in their responses (e.g., Mulvey, Propp, Barthes), which was very encouraging when employed appropriately. Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesised and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings.

Candidates responded evenly on all four micro elements.

Section B

General Comments

A significant number of responses were without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. Several responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was not credit-worthy, given that the focus is on recent (within the last five years) and relevant examples. Another observation with Section B was the choosing of an independent and a blockbuster product as case studies, with candidates having only the information from two case studies from which to shape their answer, which was often self-limiting. These responses did not fully address the question, providing a generalised overview of the two case studies, rather than addressing the stem of the question. Candidates could be given more freedom to research each area outlined in the specification, building up resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), which would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with Section B.

Question 2
Analyse the ways in which technology is changing the ways in which we consume media.

The question was clearly accessible to all candidates, as most had some first-hand experience to discuss, thus eliciting a wide range of answers. Most case studies tended to focus on the film and music industry resulting in some accomplished responses. The most interesting and engaging responses were from the games industry, as they were often quite personal and well supported with detailed and relevant case study knowledge.

The strongest responses displayed direct engagement with the question, with comprehensive evidence from case studies and a diversity of texts and institutions offered. Weaker answers were merely a personal discussion of streaming services and the closure of cinemas during the pandemic, lacking any meaningfully detailed case study support, rather than evaluating the ubiquity (or not), of consumption, and deploying a limited technical vocabulary. More confident answers were able to discuss consumption of cross platform media, including the notions of an active/passive audience, prosumerism, democratisation and interactivity. In most cases, relevant media theory was largely ignored, resulting in the lack of any informed critical debate.

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Question 3
Evaluate the arguments against media ownership by fewer and fewer companies.

Responses to this question were generally more confident than those to Question 2. Most were technically informed around the debate and were equipped with relevant case studies. Many were able to provide case study material and argue the impact of ownership by conglomerates and independents on audiences. The advantages and disadvantages of horizontal/vertical integration, mergers and oligopolies versus underfunding and creative methods of production/distribution from independents were discussed in the strongest responses, often citing Disney/Marvel/Lucasfilm as a case study. The key focus of the question was to evaluate the arguments against media ownership, which invited discussion around the increase of 'choice' yet diminution of diversity. Again, some of the stronger responses were able to apply media theory (Curran, Seaton et al) to their critical debate.

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/22
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which was based on an extract from *Stranger Things*.

Section B requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

General comments

There was a good spread of marks across both sections of the paper, with several candidates showing evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples and appropriate use of accurate terminology. While there were contemporary examples used in Section B to illustrate points, often candidates would generalise about their chosen case studies. The ability to address the key terms of the question, and to shape relevant knowledge towards fully answering it, was often not in evidence. The new mark scheme requires candidates to engage with theory and current media debate, which was often scant.

Section A

Question 1
Analyse how the extract from *Stranger Things* constructs meaning, including the specific representations of individuals, groups, events or places, through the following technical elements:

- **camera shots, angles, movement and composition**
- **sound**
- **mise-en-scène**
- **editing.**

There was evidence of sound understanding of technical skills, with most candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. Technical knowledge was often impressive across all four areas. However, some candidates simply identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This did not allow for opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently these candidates were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates could easily identify meaning, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. Often, candidates merely narrated what is seen on screen, leading to limited responses, rather than providing a deeper exploration of the connotations of micro elements employed. Responses would often argue that the scientist was afraid, without exploring the dangers of playing God with science, for example, or indeed the tropes of the horror genre. In many cases, the core concept of representation was ignored, with candidates superficially focusing on the atmosphere of the extract. Centres should focus on the demands of the 5

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strands of the mark scheme, ensuring that candidates are aware of concepts of representation, the exploration of social significances, and how to analyse texts underpinned with key theories and appropriate media terminology.

There were some excellent responses at the higher end of the range, highlighting candidates' understanding of the ways in which meaning and representation is constructed through the use of different technical areas. There were some very sophisticated, analytical responses demonstrating an understanding of how meaning and representation is created, coupled with an excellent use of technical terminology. Often candidates were able to link the technical codes with analysis of the potential representations of nostalgic Speilbergian 1980s suburbia; representations of "geeky/nerdy" kids; females as authoritative mothers or unattainable objects of lust; moral lessons of out-of-control science; representations of adults vs children; the interlinking of the two locations and the potential deadly effects of the experiments on suburbia.

Common weaknesses in responses were identifying technical codes, but not exploring how meaning is created; the tendency towards narrative or descriptive responses, rather than analysis; repeated points throughout or reduced analysis to one word; inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' or 'switch' instead of 'cut'). Some candidates managed to successfully apply theory in their responses (e.g., Mulvey, Propp, Barthes), which was very encouraging when employed appropriately. Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesised and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings.

Candidates responded evenly on all four micro elements.

Section B

General Comments

A significant number of responses were without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. Several responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was not credit-worthy, given that the focus is on recent (within the last five years) and relevant examples. Another observation with Section B was the choosing of an independent and a blockbuster product as case studies, with candidates having only the information from two case studies from which to shape their answer, which was often self-limiting. These responses did not fully address the question, providing a generalised overview of the two case studies, rather than addressing the stem of the question. Candidates could be given more freedom to research each area outlined in the specification, building up resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), which would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with Section B.

Question 2
To what extent are your own media consumption practices typical of wider trends?

The question was clearly accessible to all candidates, as most had some first-hand experience to discuss, thus eliciting a wide range of answers. Most case studies tended to focus on the film and music industry resulting in some accomplished responses. The most interesting and engaging responses were from the games industry, as they were often quite personal and well supported with detailed and relevant case study knowledge. Games were explored as a multi-user experience and gaming as a spectator sport, as well as the accessibility offered through Steam.

The strongest responses displayed direct engagement with the question, with comprehensive evidence from case studies and a diversity of texts and institutions offered. Weaker answers were merely a personal discussion of streaming services and the closure of cinemas during the pandemic, lacking any meaningfully detailed case study support, rather than evaluating the ubiquity (or not), of consumption, and deployed a limited technical vocabulary. More confident answers were able to discuss consumption of cross platform media, including the notions of an active/passive audience, prosumerism, democratisation and interactivity. In most cases, relevant media theory was largely ignored, and this often resulted in the lack of any informed critical debate.

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Question 3

Analyse the importance of particular production technologies in the media area you have studied.

This question was answered more successfully than Question 2, in most cases. When candidates had learned and engaged with recent and relevant case studies (within the last five years), they were able to discuss the impact of digital technology on aesthetics (e.g. editing styles, light sensitivity, auto tune, multi-tracking); the accessibility and democratisation of technology for low-budget production (e.g. iPhone movies, bedroom studios, app development) which has led to the explosion of podcasting and app/games development for example; the developments in AR and VR and the impacts of digital technology in a production context. Weaker responses tended to answer on convergence and ignore the focus on production. Some candidates were able to support their analysis using a range of theorists to support their points (Gauntlett, Leadbetter, Curran and Seaton et al).

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/23
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which was based on an extract from *Stranger Things*.

Section B requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

General comments

There was a good spread of marks across both sections of the paper, with several candidates showing evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples and appropriate use of accurate terminology. While there were contemporary examples used in Section B to illustrate points, often candidates would generalise about their chosen case studies. The ability to address the key terms of the question, and to shape relevant knowledge towards fully answering it, was often not in evidence. The new mark scheme requires candidates to engage with theory and current media debate, which was often scant.

Section A

Question 1
Analyse how the extract from *Stranger Things* constructs meaning, including the specific representations of individuals, groups, events or places, through the following technical elements:

- **camera shots, angles, movement and composition**
- **sound**
- **mise-en-scène**
- **editing.**

There was evidence of sound understanding of technical skills, with most candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. Technical knowledge was often impressive across all four areas. However, some candidates simply identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This did not allow for opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently these candidates were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates could easily identify meaning, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. Often, candidates merely narrated what is seen on screen, leading to limited responses, rather than providing a deeper exploration of the connotations of micro elements employed. Responses would often argue that the scientist was afraid, without exploring the dangers of playing God with science, for example, or indeed the tropes of the horror genre. In many cases, the core concept of representation was ignored, with candidates superficially focusing on the atmosphere of the extract. Centres should focus on the demands of the 5

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Candidates responded evenly on all four micro elements.

Section B

General Comments

A significant number of responses were without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. Several responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was not credit-worthy, given that the focus is on recent (within the last five years) and relevant examples. Another observation with Section B was the choosing of an independent and a blockbuster product as case studies, with candidates having only the information from two case studies from which to shape their answer, which was often self-limiting. These responses did not fully address the question, providing a generalised overview of the two case studies, rather than addressing the stem of the question. Candidates could be given more freedom to research each area outlined in the specification, building up resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), which would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with Section B.

Question 2
To what extent are your own media consumption practices typical of wider trends?

The question was clearly accessible to all candidates, as most had some first-hand experience to discuss, thus eliciting a wide range of answers. Most case studies tended to focus on the film and music industry resulting in some accomplished responses. The most interesting and engaging responses were from the games industry, as they were often quite personal and well supported with detailed and relevant case study knowledge. Games were explored as a multi-user experience and gaming as a spectator sport, as well as the accessibility offered through Steam.

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This question was answered more successfully than Question 2, in most cases. When candidates had learned and engaged with recent and relevant case studies (within the last five years), they were able to discuss the impact of digital technology on aesthetics (e.g. editing styles, light sensitivity, auto tune, multi-tracking); the accessibility and democratisation of technology for low-budget production (e.g. iPhone movies, bedroom studios, app development) which has led to the explosion of podcasting and app/games development for example; the developments in AR and VR and the impacts of digital technology in a production context. Weaker responses tended to answer on convergence and ignore the focus on production. Some candidates were able to support their analysis using a range of theorists to support their points (Gauntlett, Leadbetter, Curran and Seaton et al).

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/03
Advanced Portfolio

Key messages

To successfully complete this coursework component, candidates should:

- complete one of the four set briefs
- keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project, their final three artefacts meeting the requirements of their chosen brief, and a critical reflection upon their work
- aim to complete these elements to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools
- reflect upon their work both in blog posts and the critical reflection
- ensure the blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

Individual candidate Record Cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective and strand. If candidates have worked in groups, comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

General comments

This was the first session of the revised 9607 syllabus and most centres have taken on board the new elements of the syllabus; in this case, the new Assessment Objectives, mark criteria, reduced total marks available, briefs with new minor tasks – including the requirement to produce a branded social media page rather than a website, and a new essay format for the critical reflection. However, some centres appear to still be using the previous syllabus and working from the old briefs and mark scheme. It is important that centres keep up to date with changes in the syllabus. To that end they should regularly check the school Support Hub and read, and act upon, any 'Syllabus Change' documents.

Centres and their cohorts have had another very difficult year due to the pandemic and are once again to be congratulated on producing a high standard of work in very difficult circumstances. Despite restrictions on contact and movement, candidates have risen to the challenge and produced some very professional submissions for this component. Many candidates presented detailed and focused research into appropriate existing media, using skills, knowledge and understanding gained over the complete course to effectively plan and construct their own products. Most demonstrated good levels of skill in the use of media tools in video, print and online production. Critical reflections demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the subject and the most effective were able to clearly reflect upon their own work.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

The number of centres creating blog hubs continues to increase, but many are still not doing so. Centres are reminded that this is good practice, and that the blog hub (a blog post or webpage containing hyperlinks to all the centre's candidates' blogs) allows Moderators easy access to individual candidates' work.

It is important that centres check that, within candidate blogs, all links are working, and that the Moderator is given access to all documents. This is especially important where candidates have used Google documents to present work outside of the blog. This session, Moderators spent a great deal of time contacting centres for access to work.

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The most effective blogs used a linear format, organising the blog so that the earliest post is last, and the most recent post is first. The package of products and the critical reflection should be the first thing seen when opening the blog. All elements should be clearly labelled whether by use of menus, tags, or headers. Candidates who documented the whole process of production in detail tended to be most successful. They showed clear evidence of research in all aspects of the production, clearly documenting and justifying the choices and decisions they made – including the ideas at each stage that they rejected.

At this level a substantial amount of evidence, in a variety of forms (photos, video, articles, audio, presentation, surveys, comparisons, annotations, text, mock-ups, tests, drafts and roughs), is needed to illustrate an effective understanding of the core concepts. Some candidates are presenting more than fifty meaningful blog posts.

Centres are reminded that all elements of the Advanced Portfolio must be online, either on or linked to the blog; disks, USB's and printouts should not be sent, and will be disregarded by Moderators.

Critical reflections

In the new mark scheme, Assessment Objective (AO) 2 draws heavily upon evidence presented in the Critical Reflection. Therefore, candidates need to fully address the four set questions. The mark scheme clearly states across all levels that there should be a degree of engagement with **all** questions. If candidates do not engage with **all** the questions, they self-penalise, and this should be reflected in the centre's marking.

The new syllabus requires that candidates produce an 'evaluative essay', therefore centres should prepare candidates for this and discourage simple responses to the four questions set out as four paragraphs under the question heading. Some candidates seemed to struggle with writing an essay that addressed all four questions within the confines outlined in the syllabus – '. . . around 1000 words'. Centres should advise candidates that this word count should be seen as an advisory minimum. Fewer than 1000 words candidates are liable to self-penalise through lack of depth of reflection. Candidates should focus on presenting a well structured and argued reflective and analytical essay, rather than concerning themselves with the word count.

There is no longer a requirement for the critical reflection to use a creative approach to presentation. However, some candidates made good use of captioned images from their work to support the content of their essays. This is good practice and to be encouraged.

The strongest critical reflections tended to be from candidates who had kept the most reflective records of their research, planning and production. Successful candidates thus answered the questions using clear examples from all stages of their production.

Research and planning

The third strand of AO3 relates directly to the candidate's research and planning, and how this has led to the construction of the final products. Therefore, all research and planning materials should be posted to candidate blogs and made accessible to the Moderator.

Candidate blogs should include a range of research and planning materials posted over the duration of the project, which illustrate the process of production from research and initial ideas to the final production packages and critical reflection. The best research materials demonstrated a range of textual analysis with focused and annotated examples. It is important that candidates include the exploration of similar products aimed at similar audiences to those chosen for their production tasks. In the strongest work the research was revisited at stages throughout the production and reflection process, for the purpose of comparison and to demonstrate how conventions were used or deliberately broken. Audience research was strongest when learners went beyond quantitative based questionnaires, which are rarely as useful as qualitative, and analysed how target audiences engage with products. Candidates were rewarded when they explored multiple ideas for their product and then documented the progression and development of those into pre-production documents.

There was a range of excellent planning and development presented, especially where candidates had recorded evidence that enabled them to reflect and make informed choices about the way forward for their productions. Centres could continue to encourage learners to include evidence such as: script readings, screen tests for actors, location pre shoots, practice shots or lighting tests, costume fittings and ideas, behind the scenes videos or photos, production vlogs (video logs), and 'making-of' video(s). Candidates could also be encouraged to take photos or video on the set and annotate them with reflection of their own roles. Work

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was almost always improved when candidates gained feedback on rough cuts, and in many strong portfolios this was done on several occasions for each of the major and minor tasks.

Centres are reminded that research and planning should not just reflect the process of production of the major task. The briefs are to produce a package of work; therefore, candidates should research and plan the major task, the two minor tasks, and branding across the products.

Production

Products are primarily assessed across the first two strands of AO3. Marks should be awarded for the application of technical skills and how these are used to communicate meaning. Products should demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of media language and key concepts.

The most successful production work built on previous skills, knowledge and understanding. Candidates produced packages of products demonstrating consistency in style, purpose, and quality between the major and the minor tasks. Strong examples paid close attention to simulating form, style and generic conventions across video, print, and online work as well as identifying a clear branding strategy.

Of the four briefs (Music Promotion Package, Film Promotion Package, Documentary Package, and Short Film Package) the most popular continues to be the Short Film Package closely followed by the Music Promotion Package. The least popular, but often best executed, was the Film Promotion Package.

Centres are reminded that the briefs as set out are a requirement of the syllabus and should not be amended by candidates. In this series, some candidates chose a major task from one brief with a minor task from a different one. This should be avoided in future series.

Major video products

All briefs contain a major video product. These are a music video, two film trailers, an extract from an original TV documentary, or a complete short film.

There were some creative approaches to music videos, and many were of a professional standard. These employed a range of forms with the most popular being a mixture of narrative and performance. Candidates rose to the challenge of Covid lockdowns, dispensing with group performances and focusing on the solo artist. Weaker productions tended to be simple narratives accompanied by music. The most successful had the star persona/s to the fore and were able to carry this ‘branding’ across to their minor products.

The film trailers were often well considered, and most candidates chose to produce a teaser trailer plus a theatre trailer. Codes and conventions were often researched and applied consistently, with this brief lending itself well to the promotional package format. Candidates working on this brief tended to have a clear idea of the narrative of the entire film they were promoting and were able to select and film appropriate extracts. Weaker productions tended to present too much narrative or focus for too long on one part of the film.

TV Documentary extracts were of mixed quality. The most successful were conscious of the fact that they were extracts, and candidates often contextualised these in their blogs. Codes and conventions were adhered to, and it was often clear that research into theories of documentary production had been explored and applied. Weaker examples tended to attempt too much and started to resemble full short documentaries. They were often poorly researched and edited with long shots of verbosity and/or repetitive information.

There were some powerful short films with thoughtful narratives, conscious choices of mise-en-scene, and well considered casting – some of which was because of Covid restrictions, but which was nevertheless well considered. Weaker products tended to try to produce a short feature film rather than treating the product as a distinct genre.
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Centres are reminded of the importance of producing risk assessments for all video products. It is a concern that many products contain scenes with weapons, some of which are clearly either real or very good replicas. Products often contain vehicles driven at speed and sometimes dangerous stunts which centres should discourage.

Some centres where English is not the first language are choosing to present products in their first language. This is acceptable for video products if English subtitles are used, and the rest of the portfolio is completed in English. There was some effective subtitling this series, especially of the short films.

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Minor print products

Whilst there were some excellent minor print products conforming to appropriate conventions and continuing the branding of the major product, many seemed to be an after-thought. Candidates should view the minor products as an integral part of the brief and centres should award marks based on the whole package, not just the major task.

The most effective digi-packs (Music Promotion) had clearly been well researched and employed an appropriate number of panels. Images had been produced specifically for the product and usually promoted the star persona/s of the major task. Weaker products often resembled vinyl LP covers with just two panels and limited imagery, often lifted directly from the major product.

Film posters (Film Promotion) were the most effective of the minor tasks with candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of their role in the promotion of the film. The main weakness with some posters was the production of original photographs, with some candidates relying on screen grabs from their major products for this purpose.

Magazine articles (Documentary) were often well written and clearly a product of effective research. However, if centres choose to offer this brief, they should offer candidates some instruction in journalistic technique in preparation. Copy should be carefully proofed and formatted appropriately. The most effective products were presented as articles from existing professional magazines or online journals. Articles should contain some original photography, as well as clear copy and effective design.

The short film festival postcards (Short Film) tended not to reflect the quality of the films they were promoting. Often candidates would lift an image from their film and place text over it, along with the film festival logo. Postcards were presented as single sided and were often lacking in detail. Some candidates confused postcards with posters and ended up producing a mixed brief, which is not permitted. The most successful products again demonstrated a clear link to detailed research, employed some original imagery, and considered both sides of the card.

Social Media pages

All briefs require the production of a social media page as part of the promotional package. This page should reflect the overall branding of the main product and be used to demonstrate an understanding of how products target their audiences. This is a new requirement for the syllabus and some centres have not taken this on board. Candidates at these centres have continued to produce the previous requirement of a web page. For this series, Moderators have considered web pages as social media, but in future will not do so. The syllabus is clear in asking for a social media page, and centres should make candidates aware of this.

Social media pages may be ‘live’ online or produced within templates and embedded in candidate blogs. Centres should ensure the safety of their candidates when using live social media pages and adhere to any local guidelines.

The most popular format for this series was Instagram, but some candidates used generic templates based on the Facebook format. Whichever format is used, candidates should combine a range of text-based posts and original photographic images to complete this product effectively. The most effective products were clearly promotional and reflected the branding of the main product. Weaker products simply posted images from the main product, with little or no sense of purpose.

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/41
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

This is the first year of the new format for this exam, and most candidates followed the rubric correctly. However, time management presented a challenge to a significant number of candidates, resulting in some short, rushed responses to ***Section B*** which were often of similar length to ***Section A*** (despite double the number of the marks being available for the former). The syllabus states that case studies should feature a majority of contemporary texts, although any text may be used to give historical context. The term contemporary is used to mean a text which was first published no more than approximately five years before the examination year, in this case 2016.

General comments

There were some outstanding scripts from fully engaged candidates who had clearly embraced the spirit of the syllabus. These featured personalised contemporary case studies (including topical events which impacted on them), insightful comment and an exceptional grasp of theory. Above all, they addressed the set question. There was a tendency towards centre-taught case studies which were repeated within the exam in varying degrees of detail, often at great length. These tended to ignore the set question. Such case studies can limit the potential achievement of the best candidates, as guided independent study often results in a greater level of engagement and learning. Often, such responses were in tandem with a reliance on historic texts to support points. The purpose of a case study is to provide candidates with material which exemplifies the relevant features of their chosen topic area – they are a collection of associated texts, linked in some way, which the candidate knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience. Candidates may have analysed these texts in detail, applying a variety of media theories if appropriate, and many know much about these texts. However, this paper requires more than a simple re-telling of these details. Some candidates seemed to offer a premeditated and learned essay, which bore little relevance to the question they had chosen to respond to. These answers were not able to access the highest level of the mark scheme, which calls for arguments which address the set question directly.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – Regulation: *Evaluate the reasons for and against stricter media regulation.*

Where the actual question was addressed directly, the most popular argument was very much on the side of stricter regulation, with some nuanced responses far outweighed by simplistic assertions of how damaging certain texts are for audiences. Many responses merely reproduced the history of media regulation with varying degrees of accuracy.

Many responses focussed on BBFC/PEGI Ofcom with some reference to domestic regulatory systems. The Joker was a popular case study. as was GTA. Clockwork Orange and ‘Jamie Bulger’ (not Child's Play 3) made frequent appearances alongside potted histories of BBFC with a distinct lack of contextual understanding. Often, the length and detail of these historical responses (beginning in 1912) served to hinder the later answers in the paper.

Stronger answers focussed on the challenges for regulatory bodies presented by social media, with many referencing the Trump Twitter ban and events of January 6th. Influencers and the impact they might have on young audiences was considered by some, although this tended to be part of an assertion that young minds are impressionable – Bandura’s work was often cited in support of this. If media effects are to be taught,

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perhaps the work of Martin Barker and Sonia Livingstone would lend themselves to a greater degree of analysis. The best answers dealt with the evaluation prompt and offered an assessment of the need for stricter regulation, as the question demanded. Less effective responses merely offered a variety of unconnected films, mainly from the latter half of the 20th Century, and the Leveson inquiry also seemed to be a popular if not especially useful example given. Hypodermic and Uses and Gratifications models were frequently cited, but rarely were they applied to texts as part of an analytical approach. It is important to indicate which country the regulation body refers to, particularly when mixing and matching USA/UK/host country, and to give them their standard name.

Question 2 – Postmodernism: *Analyse the challenges of interpreting the postmodern text*.

This was the question where most candidates displayed at least some knowledge of the area, and at best a well referenced and insightful contribution to the question. The best responses examined the challenges rather than merely listing them. Postmodernism seemed to be the one area where candidates were most confident in relating texts to theory, citing key thinkers such as Baudrillard, Jameson and Lyotard and successfully applying their ideas

The strongest responses featured highly individualised case studies including *ThIs Is Not A Game. Gen500 secs*. Centre taught texts included *The Laundromat, This Is America, Bandersnatch*. Historic texts featured heavily here in particular *Inglorious Basterds (*despite a more recent Tarantino film*), Pulp Fiction, Donnie Darko, Life On Mars, Black Mirr*or Seasons 1 and 2,

Many candidates questioned the nature of the concept of postmodernism rather than assuming that all texts are now postmodern.

Question 3 – Power and the Media: *Audiences now have just as much power as media institutions.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

Of all the questions in the exam, this one produced the least assured responses. Although candidates provided much comment upon the debate, only a minority developed these arguments by drawing upon theory and examples to illustrate the influence conglomerates have upon the media environment. Audience was generally viewed as a bloc, rather than being a constituency of individual readers of texts. The question clearly points to the contemporary, inviting candidates to examine debates around how some memes become viral, advertising disguised as user-generated content and the rise of alternative voices which utilise the platforms the web offers.

There were some very interesting debates around 'Cancel Culture' although few attempted to unpack the controversial term which could be considered a moral panic. Weaker responses merely asserted how effective it was, some citing J K Rowling. Social media (in particular, Twitter) was frequently cited – useful examples included BLM. There were some interesting responses around the impact of Fandom/Participatory Culture (Henry Jenkins) upon media companies, including the pressure to not cancel shows. *Sonic the Hedgehog Movie* featured heavily, often as the only example of audience influence. Some strong responses considered the balance between 'centralised' and 'de-centralised' media, but perhaps then forgot that, although social media does in some ways promote the freedom of expression of the individual, all social media platforms are in fact owned by large media corporations. The strongest answers were successful in exploring the complex relationships between producers and audiences.

Question 4 – Media Ecology: *Analyse the significance of a particular technological development in the media.*

This is the synoptic part of the exam, and, at the highest end, a good number of candidates excelled, being awarded the very highest marks on occasion. The best responses dealt with the web. These included such innovations as streaming - both of conventional shows and short form video -with Tik Tok et al expanding into the debate around mergers and acquisitions. Jenkins' Participatory Culture/Fandom and Shirky' s End of Audience were addressed with a degree of personal engagement, knowledge, and insight. The potentially hazardous aspects of the web – data collection and closed groups propagating misinformation via Telegram - were often explored. Many weaker responses praised the Smartphone, then listed all the things you can do with it – take photos and so on.

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Less successful approaches fell into two categories:

1. A ‘common sense/general knowledge’ response, containing no evidence to show the candidate has studied Media – these often refer to internet shopping and Uber as evidence.

2. A lengthy historical account of McLuhan’s theory without any reference to the question. The development of Media Ecology can of course be referred to, but for guidance it is recommended candidates address the set question directly. The history of tech, e.g., the printing press/motion picture camera/CGI also featured.

Some areas candidates may have chosen to consider are the impact on society of data gathering and sharing/protection; the changing modes of reception and impact on audience; the impact of developing technologies on media language; the changing nature of media ownership and distribution models; audience engagement with new tech; globalisation – the response of audience and institutions.

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/42
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

This is the first year of the new format for this exam, and most candidates followed the rubric correctly. However, time management presented a challenge to a significant number of candidates, resulting in some short, rushed responses to ***Section B*** which were often of similar length to ***Section A*** (despite double the number of the marks being available for the former). The syllabus states that case studies should feature a majority of contemporary texts, although any text may be used to give historical context. The term contemporary is used to mean a text which was first published no more than approximately five years before the examination year, in this case 2016.

General comments

There were some outstanding scripts from fully engaged candidates who had clearly embraced the spirit of the syllabus. These featured personalised contemporary case studies (including topical events which impacted on them), insightful comment and exceptional grasp of theory. Above all, they addressed the set question. There was a tendency towards centre-taught case studies which were repeated in varying degrees of detail, often at great length. These tended to ignore the set question. Such case studies can limit the potential achievement of the best candidates, as guided independent study often results in a greater level of engagement and learning. Often, such responses were in tandem with a reliance on historic texts to support points. The purpose of a case study is to provide candidates with material which exemplifies the relevant features of their chosen topic area – they are a collection of associated texts, linked in some way, which the candidate knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience. Candidates may have analysed these texts in detail, applying a variety of media theories if appropriate, and many know much about these texts. However, this paper requires more than a simple re-telling of these details. Some candidates seemed to offer a premeditated and learned essay, which bore little relevance to the question they had chosen to respond to. These answers were not able to access the highest level of the mark scheme, which calls for arguments which address the set question directly.

This paper is the culmination of two years of media study, so there is an expectation that candidates will be comfortable exploring both the detail of texts and applying their knowledge and understanding of the key concepts when responding to a range of questions. Of the three topic areas in Section A, Postmodernism seemed to be the one where candidates were most confident in relating texts to theory, citing key thinkers such as Baudrillard, Jameson and Lyotard and successfully applying their ideas. Candidates seemed to struggle more with finding theorists to apply to the questions on Regulation and Power and the Media. It would assist many candidates if they thought about the questions in relation to the key concepts of Media Industry and Audience and considered the implications of ownership for cultural hegemony, representation, and globalisation, where national governments struggle to regulate powerful international conglomerates, for example.

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Use of examples

The requirement in the specification is that case studies should be no more than five years before the year of the exam series being taken. Despite this, some candidates used exclusively older texts from beyond this cut-off date. The use of an occasional historic example to make a point about contemporary texts is of course acceptable, but the focus should be on media in the here and now. This was particularly true of the question on regulation, which asked candidates if new media required new forms of regulation, so lengthy accounts of censorship of printing by the Church in the sixteenth century were not rewarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – Regulation: *New media require new forms of regulation.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

Stronger answers focussed on the challenges for regulatory bodies presented by social media, with many referencing the Trump Twitter ban and events of January 6th. Influencers and the impact they might have on young audiences was considered by some, although this tended to be part of an assertion that young minds are impressionable – Bandura's work was often cited in support of this. If media effects are to be taught, perhaps the work of Martin Barker and Sonia Livingstone would lend themselves to a greater degree of analysis. The best answers dealt with the evaluation prompt and offered an assessment of the need for stricter regulation as the question demanded. Less effective responses merely offered a variety of unconnected films, mainly from the latter half of the 20th Century, and the Leveson inquiry also seemed to be a popular if not especially useful example given. Hypodermic and Uses and Gratifications models were cited frequently but rarely were they applied to texts as part of an analytical approach. It is important to indicate which country the regulation body refers to particularly when mixing and matching USA/UK/host country and to give them their standard name. Regulation – exploring past debates about specific films, particularly outdated or historic examples, was generally not as successful an approach as those candidates who focused on issues regarding regulation raised by new media such as streaming services, or on specific social media examples, of which there are plenty of contemporary ones.

Question 2 – Postmodernism: *Evaluate the arguments for and against considering particular media texts as postmodern*.

The question invites comment on texts, the selection of which proved crucial to the outcome. Essentially, the reliance upon historic texts hindered many candidates who were clearly capable. This topic seemed to be the one where candidates were most confident in relating texts to theory, citing key thinkers such as Baudrillard, Jameson and Lyotard and successfully applying their ideas.

Most candidates displayed at least some knowledge of the area, and at best a well referenced and insightful contribution to the question. The best responses featured highly individualised case studies including *This Is Not A Game. Gen500 secs*. Centre taught texts included *The Laundromat, This Is America, Bandersnatch*. Historic texts featured heavily here in particular *Inglorious Basterds (*despite a more recent Tarantino film*), Pulp Fiction, Donnie Darko, Life On Mars, Black Mirro*r seasons 1 and 2.

Many candidates questioned the nature of the concept of postmodernism, rather than assuming that all texts now are postmodern.

Question 3 – Power and the Media: *Analyse the ways in which particular representations of social groups may reflect the organisations which produce them*.

Some strong responses considered the balance between 'centralised' and 'de-centralised' media, but perhaps then forgot that, although social media does in some ways promote the freedom of expression of the individual, all social media platforms are in fact owned by large media corporations. The best answers were successful in exploring the complex relationships between producers and audiences. Other very good answers focussed on Fate: the Winx saga and the casting controversy which erupted around it on social media, including fans critiques on YouTube.

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Question 4 – Media Ecology: *'The media determine how we understand and connect with the world.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

Generally, the Media Ecology question was answered better than the ***Section A*** questions. Many candidates had a very good grasp of the concept of Media Ecology, based on their understanding of McLuhan and Postman's ideas, and how these had been developed over time. At times, essays lapsed into a descriptive listing of all the things which audiences can do on the internet now, without a more subtle understanding of how the means of interaction and reception were changing our social behaviour (a key tenet of the topic). However, there was sound understanding of Media Ecology in evidence.

Jenkins' Participatory Culture/Fandom and Shirky' s End of Audience were addressed with a degree of personal engagement, knowledge and insight. The potentially hazardous of aspects of the web – data collection and closed groups propagating misinformation via Telegram - were often explored.

Less successful approaches fell into two categories:

1. A 'common sense/general knowledge' response, containing no evidence to show the candidate has studied Media – these often refer to internet shopping and Uber as evidence.

2. A lengthy historical account of McLuhan's theory without any reference to the question. The development of Media Ecology can of course be referred to, but for guidance it is recommended candidates address the set question directly. The history of tech, e.g., the printing press/motion picture camera/CGI also featured.

Some areas candidates may have chosen to consider are the impact on society of data gathering and sharing/protection; the changing modes of reception and impact on audience; the impact of developing technologies on media language; the changing nature of media ownership and distribution models; audience engagement with new tech; globalisation – the response of audience and institutions.

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